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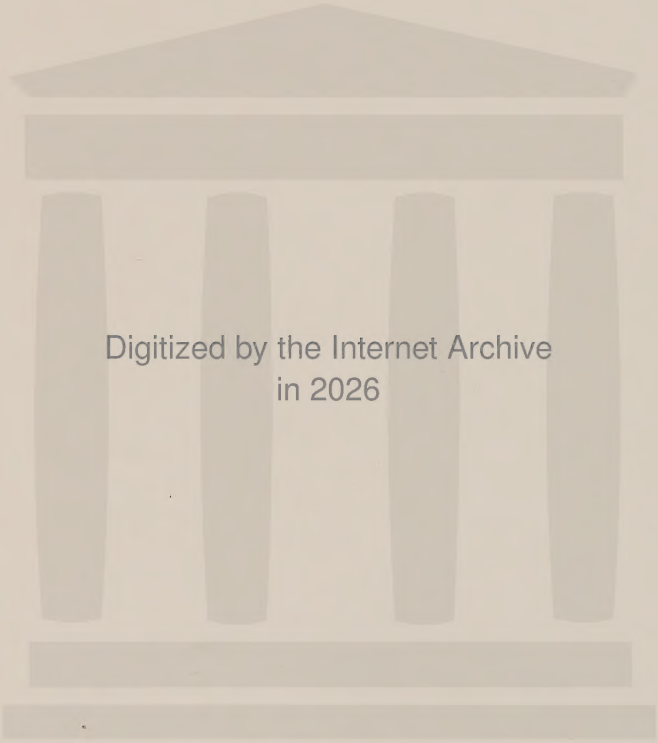
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THE

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SERMONS PREACHED

BY

C. H. SPURGEON.

REVISED AND PUBLISHED

DURING THE YEAR 1893.

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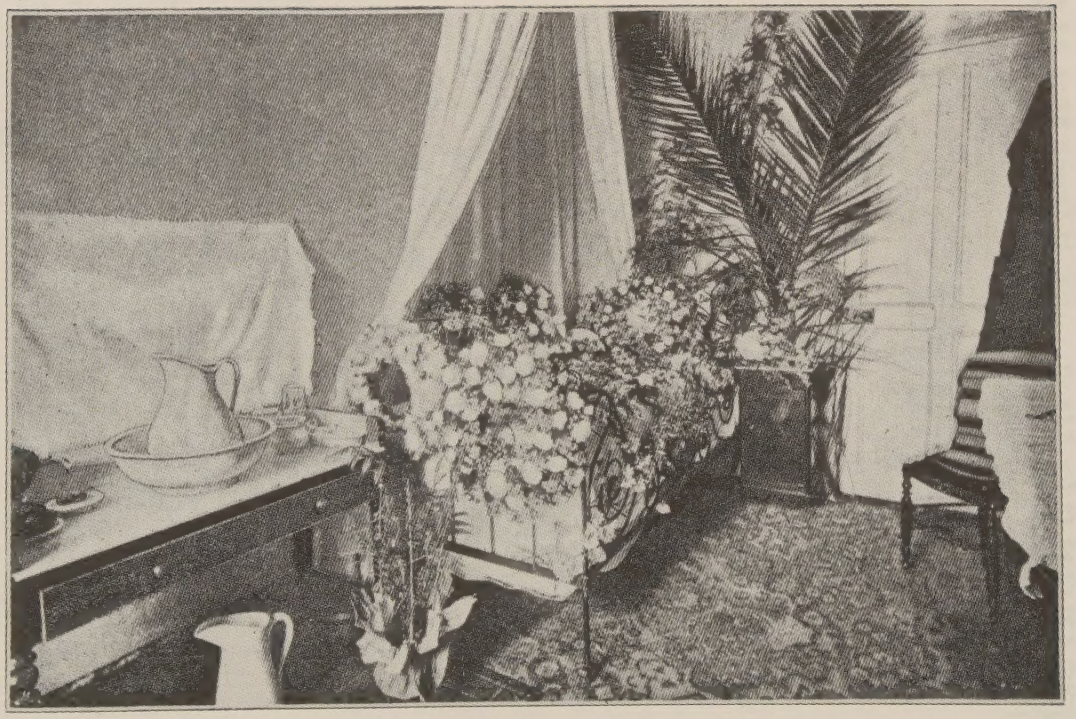

MR. SPURGEON'S BEDROOM AFTER HIS REMOVAL.

TO

THE ONE GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH,

IN

THE TRINITY OF HIS SACRED PERSONS,

BE ALL HONOUR AND GLORY

WORLD WITHOUT END,

AMEN.

TO THE GLORIOUS FATHER, AS THE COVENANT GOD OF ISRAEL;

TO THE GRACIOUS SON, THE REDEEMER OF HIS PEOPLE;

TO THE HOLY GHOST, THE AUTHOR OF SANCTIFICATION;

BE EVERLASTING PRAISE FOR THAT GOSPEL OF THE FREE GRACE OF GOD

HEREIN PROCLAIMED UNTO MEN.

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Re-united in Glory.

W. OLNEY.

W. HIGGS.

C. H. S.'s MOTHER.

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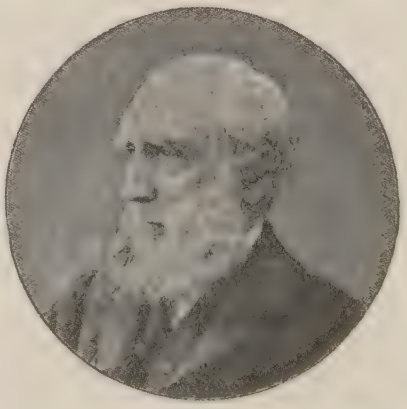

REV. GEORGE ROGERS.

"For Ever with the Lord."

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE RIGHT KEY-NOTE FOR THE NEW YEAR.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 1ST, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD."—Psalm cxv. 18.

IT has been truly said that, if the members of our churches were in a right condition of heart, the work of the pastor towards them would be no more difficult than that of a commanding officer to his troops. A general, or a captain, has never to study eloquence; he has simply to give the word of command tersely and plainly, and himself to lead the way. So, if our hearts were right in the sight of God, we should not want illustrations to win attention, and arguments to urge us on; we should only want to know what is the special duty of the hour; and, helped by the Divine Spirit, we should, with alacrity, seek to perform it.

Well, now, let us hope that this is our condition to-night. God grant that it may be! Certainly, it ought to be our condition in reference to the duty which is taught us in the text. I shall but, as it were, give the word of command in my Master's name; and I trust that the Holy Spirit will be working in all our spirits, causing each one of us to say, "Ready, ay, ready, to bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord."

You noticed, while we were reading the Psalm, that it contained a piece of cutting sarcasm upon the gods of the heathen, which are unable to do anything for their worshippers. Albeit that they have the outward semblance of the organs of life and sense, yet in those organs there is neither life nor power. Their mouths cannot speak; their eyes cannot see; their ears cannot hear; their noses cannot smell; their hands cannot handle; their feet cannot walk. But our God is declared to be the living God, who is in the heavens, and who hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Well, that being so, a living God should be worshipped by a living people in a living manner. This is one of the rules of Christian worship, which we should never forget. Let us come before the Lord, not as mere bodies, fancying that it is

enough to put in an appearance in the place where prayer is wont to be made; but let us bring our living selves, our souls, our hearts, into God's worship; and whether it be in prayer, or in praise, or in the proclamation of his truth, or in the listening to the gospel message, let us do it with all our life. Let the praise be full of life; let the prayer be full of life; let the ministration of the truth be the lively oracle of the living God; and let the ear, the heart's ear, be all alive while we listen to the gospel. There is nothing more that is acceptable to God in the mere routine of Christian worship, than there is in the turning of the windmills of the Tartars, when they put their prayers upon the mill, and they revolve with the blowing of the wind. If true life is absent from our service, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, though we have the richest music, though we have everything that heart can devise to create a charm, yet it profiteth us nothing, and brings no glory to God. "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living," is a text which may be applied to dead services as well as to dead men. May the Lord, in mercy, send to some religious services a resurrection! May he be pleased to put a living heart and soul into them; for if there be not these, he will not accept a dead sacrifice at men's hands! A living God must be worshipped in a living way by a living people.

In the context we see also that, as it is true with the heathen's idols, that "they that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth in them," so ought it to be with us in reference to our God. A living God should have a living people; and a blessing God should have a blessing people. He has blessed us with unspeakable favours. He is always blessing us; it is not possible for us to compute the amount of blessing which he is constantly bestowing upon us. Therefore, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name." If he doth exalt thee with his favour, take care that thou dost exalt him with thy praise. If he enriches thee with his blessings, bring thou thy blessings, and offer them at his feet, as the wise men brought their gold and frankincense and myrrh, and laid them as tribute at the feet of the new-born King. Bless a blessing God. What can be more congruous? As the echo answereth to the voice, so let our blessing of God answer to the blessing we have received from God, even as Paul puts it, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." This, then, is the work that is to occupy us to-night, and the work in which we shall continue, I trust, from this time forth and for evermore. Living unto the living God, time and eternity will be spent in blessing the blessing God.

Notice, in the text, which is clearly intended to excite us to praise, first, *a mournful memory*, suggested by the word "but"; secondly, *a happy resolution:* "we will bless the Lord"; thirdly, *an appropriate commencement:* "from this time forth"; and then, fourthly, *an everlasting continuance:* "and for evermore. Praise the Lord."

I. First, then, there is in the text the trace of A MOURNFUL MEMORY. Read the preceding verse, without which we do not get the

sense of this one to the full. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. *But* we will bless the Lord from this time forth."

The mournful memory is, that of those who, at one time, praised the Lord with us, and exulted in his holy name, *during the past year some have been numbered with the dead.* There are gaps in our ranks, my brethren, which death has made during the past year. Some have been taken from us whom we could ill spare, as we thought; but they were, nevertheless, wanted up above. He who bought them had a better right to them than we had; and his prayers prevailed over ours, as they always should. We said, "Father, we will that they whom thou hast given us be with us where we are;" but Jesus prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am;" and they have gone. He had the best right to them, and we can only say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." But, as far as this world is concerned, they who have been taken from us do not praise the Lord; save that, being dead, they speak by the recollection of their holy lives, and their memory is sweet, like incense that has been burned, and leaves a perfume behind. Save for this, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." I know that in heaven they are praising him; they have been added to the orchestra above, and have helped to make it complete. Fresh songsters are there before the everlasting throne; but here they cannot swell our praises. Their bodies sleep beneath the green sward in the silence of the tomb. As I look round the different parts of the Tabernacle,—my eye being better able to distinguish the gaps than some of yours are, because I rather know something of all, and each of you knows but a part of this great congregation,—as I look around, I notice where sat one whose eye was full of glances of delight whenever the name of Jesus was mentioned. I have heard him speak in his Master's praise most sweetly and yet tearfully; but I shall never hear him here again. I looked into his tomb but a few days ago; he has gone down into silence so far as his body is concerned. There was another dear worker who was always here, I might say that he was always everywhere where there was anything to be done for Christ; and we went to his grave also, and we laid him in the silent tomb. During the year, I suppose some seventy or eighty of our number have gone over to the majority; I mean, seventy or eighty of those who were actually members of the church, besides those who, I trust, loved the Lord, although they had not confessed his name in baptism, and united with his people in church-fellowship. They have gone over to the great host above; and there are so many the fewer here. Well, what saith this to us? I will not imitate Dr. Watts, and say,—

"Hark, from the tombs a doleful sound!"

I think we hear too many doleful sounds from the tombs; but I hear a lively, earnest sound, and it says, "Brethren, keep up the song of praise unto the Lord; do not let the music falter. Our voices are gone from among you; sing, therefore, each of you, the more sweetly and loudly to make up for our absence from the earthly choir."

Now that so many saints have gone home, *there are so many the fewer on earth to praise the Lord.* O you who have recently come into the church, you who have been baptized for the dead to fill up the gaps in our ranks, be you earnest, with your loud hosannahs, to bless and magnify the name of the Lord. Brethren, let us take a blessed revenge on death; and if he takes from our numbers, let us, as God helps us, increase the real efficiency of the church, by each of us endeavouring to become double what we formerly were in the service of our Master. O Death, thou hast struck down a songster who used to sing at my side; but my voice shall be louder than before! I will make music for us both; and there shall yet come another to fill his place; and so there shall be three songs instead of two, and God shall be a gainer on earth, and a gainer in heaven, by the loss which death seemed to cause to Christ's church. They are going one after another, my brothers and sisters. They are gathering homeward one by one. The most useful, the most mighty in prayer, the most holy, the very pillars and strength of the church are going; and, as a brother said the other day, "When so many good ones are going, what can we do better than pack up, and go with them?" As each one goes, we feel almost inclined to say what the disciples said concerning Lazarus, "If he sleep, he shall do well;" and to add with Thomas, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." But I am of another mind; and I say, "No, if there are so many going, let us ask to be allowed to stop, for this great fight has to be fought out somehow; and, if some of the troops have fought the good fight, and exchanged the sword and shield for the palm-branch and the harp, let us who are left pray with all our might unto the Lord God of hosts to strengthen us in this day of battle, that we may not go till we have finished our part of the fight, and have been the means of calling others to prolong the blessed struggle by which victory shall be given to the name of Christ."

By the thought, then, of the many dead who cannot any longer praise God amongst us, let us be stimulated to bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore.

There comes up in my mind, however, another reflection, that, as others are gone, *we ourselves shall also go soon.* "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." O brethren, if we are called to preach, it is only for a little while! We have not an indefinite period in which to be wise to win souls. Our work must be done soon, or it never will be done. O teachers, you must win your children for Christ soon, for you are not to live a thousand years to go on seeking the little ones! They must be brought to Jesus soon, or they will not be brought by you, for you will have passed away. O all you Christian people, who love your Lord, be busy in those sacred works which can only be performed on earth; for angels cannot clothe the naked or feed the hungry. No angel can be a Dorcas to make garments for the poor. These things are for this life; these modes of praising God are only for time, there are others for eternity; but these are for this life, and to these we have to attend as long as we are here. To keep the church of God on earth, the church militant, in good marching order, and good working condition, and so to glorify

God here, is what we must do now, and do it soon; for "the night cometh, when no man can work." I wish we all felt more really that we are dying men. The sound of the chariot-wheels of eternity should make us quicken our pace. If you could often look through the heavenly telescope, and see the judgment-seat, the great white throne in the heavens, and the assembled multitude, and yourself rendering up your books of account to the last great Examiner, some of you would live far differently than you do. God help us so to do; and by the recollection of this "*but*", though it comes over us like a cloud to-night, let us be quickened into the immediate and joyous work of blessing and magnifying the Most High!

II. Let us now go to our second point, which is this, A HAPPY RESOLUTION. "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But *we will bless the Lord.*"

"We will bless the Lord," for it seems to us to be the very thing for which we were created. This is the flower of our being. We are never happier, surely, never more developing what God has put into us by his grace, than when we are praising and blessing him.

We will bless the Lord by our songs. They shall be more frequent than they have been. Brothers and sisters, do you sing as much as you might? Do you sing at your work, and do you sing in the household, and do you sing on your beds? I have known some who have managed to live always singing. It was my joy to know an old man, a very old man, who was famous in the village where he lived because, as he walked the streets, he was always humming a little bit of a hymn. He was a grand old Methodist of the grand old days; and he had always some glorious hymn that he would go along tooting as he went about the streets; and he sang himself to bed, and sang himself to sleep, and, I was going to say, sang himself awake; but he was scarcely awake before he began to sing again. It was all singing with him. Now, you know how the worldlings sing. You cannot be quiet in your beds, at night, because of the noise they make in the streets. Let us be as ready with the songs of Zion as they are with the songs of Gomorrah. Let us magnify the Lord with our songs far oftener than we have done.

Then, let us magnify the Lord *in our daily talk and conversation*, while we speak about him. Never speak badly of his name. Some of you do; there is sometimes a grumbling at his providences; there is a fretting at the trials he sends; there is a complaining about all sorts of things. But ye who love him, begin from this night to bless him by speaking well of his name. Bless him for everything. Bless him for the bitters; bless him for the cold; bless him for poverty and sickness. "That is a hard thing to do," say you. Yes; but it is a sweet thing to do; it will be as comforting to yourself as it will be glorifying to God.

Begin to praise him *in the tone of your spirit.* May God the blessed Comforter help you to do it by a calm, equable frame of mind, by a divine placidity of temper, by a complete subjection of the will to him, so that you shall not feel it to be subjection, but find it to be your delight that the Lord should do with you whatever pleases him! It is bliss to praise God so that our very thoughts praise him, not by

effort, but as flowers pour out their perfume; so that our inmost soul praises him, just as the bird doth sing, not as if it were task-work, but because it cannot help it. Was it not made to sing? And so it sitteth on the bare bough, before the spring has yet developed the green leaf and opening bud, and it sings even amid the frost and snow, and wakes us up in the spring morning with its hymn of praise to its Creator. "Its", I said, but I mean a thousand of them, winged choristers praising and blessing God, not because they are told that they ought to do so; but because it is their intense delight to pour out their music. Oh, that we were little birds, made always to sing God's praise! Oh, that we were drops of dew, for ever sparkling in the light of God's love! I like to look at the lilies, sometimes, and to think how they worship God. They never study a sermon, or compose a hymn, or weave a rhyme, or even think, but they serve God by standing still and showing themselves, and breathing out their sweet perfume to the winds. Oh, to be full of God, till, at last, you bless him even by existing, till life becomes a psalm, and even breathing becomes a hymn of praise unto the Most High, in whom we live, and move, and have our being! Blessed be his name, we will bless the Lord from this time forth, in some such way as that, as he shall help us!

For, dear brethren, we may well bless the Lord *because we are alive*. That "*but*" suggests that, since others have gone, we should bless him that we live. I do not know whether I would not as soon have been in heaven as here; but, still, to abide in the flesh for a while, may be more needful for some, therefore am I glad to be alive. And some of you with your children about you, with many dependent upon you, should thank God that while you are needed here you are spared here; and you should thank him who has kept you. You might have been killed in some accident. You might have been smitten down, as many have been this year, by contagious disease. You might have been in such pain to-night that death would have seemed a relief to you. Bless the Lord that it is not so. Bless him that you live. O God, our Creator and Preserver, we will from this time forth bless thee that we are alive!

Then bless God *because of life spiritual*, for there is something in that calling for devout gratitude; for to live, and yet not to be alive spiritually, is to be a walking corpse, an animated dunghill, a Lazarus who by this time stinketh, and yet is not in his grave. It is a horrible thing to be going about in this world with eyes that do not see God, and with ears that never hear his voice when he is speaking everywhere, and with a heart that never responds to his divine love. Better not to be than to be and yet not know the greatest and best of beings. Let us bless God that he has quickened us into spiritual life, for it was not so with some of you a long while ago. Nay, it is but a few months since some of you were made alive, and this new year may remind you of some former new years, and of how they were spent, and into what condition you brought yourselves. O Lord, our state of spiritual death does not bear thinking of, except we wet the page of memory with many tears! Blessed be thy name, thou hast delivered us from the bondage of corruption, and brought us into

newness of life, therefore will we bless thee from this time forth, and for evermore!

And let us bless the Lord because, according to the Psalm, *we have been blessed of him.* Read again the twelfth verse, "The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us." Now, it is not only according to the Psalm, but it is also a matter of fact. "The Lord hath been mindful of us." I do not know your histories, dear friends, as you know them; but I should like you to pull out your pocketbooks and your diaries, and just look down them. How many times has the Lord been mindful of you during the past year? I could tell of many interpositions of his divine love on my behalf; but I will not do so at this time. I will bless his name in secret for his loving-kindness towards his unworthy servant. A good old woman used to hear people speak about their Ebenezers, or stones of help, in remembrance of God's mercy, but she said that, when she looked back on hers, she thought she was looking back on a wall. They were set so closely together that they seemed to make a wall on the right hand and on the left of all her pathway. Well, that is just like mine. I am such a debtor to divine mercy that if I could but pay half a farthing in the pound, I should need to give fifty million times more than I am, or ever hope to be, worth. Oh, what I owe him! Rutherford speaks somewhere of his soul going right down in the stream of God's love, not floating in it, but sinking, foundering, going down, till mighty love went over the masthead of his soul. And such do I feel that our gratitude ought to be. The ocean of God's love rises above us so as altogether to swallow us up. The Lord has done such great things for us that, if we do not bless him, the very stones we walk on in the streets might cry out against us, and every beam in the wall might groan in the night to think that it sheltered such an ungrateful sleeper. Oh, the mercy, the forgiving mercy, the abounding mercy, the ceaseless mercy, of the living God! What tongue can ever tell it? Surely the poet did not strain metaphors too much, or use hyperboles, or push them too far, when he said,—

> "But, oh, eternity's too short
> To utter half thy praise!"

Again, we ought to praise the Lord, according to the Psalm, *because he will bless us.* You must have noticed that the psalmist expressed that idea several times in different forms: "He hath been mindful of us: he will bless us." This is a very sweet duty to which I would exhort you, to bless the Lord in the prospect of what he is going to do. Come, let us weave songs out of to-morrows! We will not boast of them; but we will bless God for them. Let us praise him for all the love and kindness that is going to be with us through all the year that is just beginning. Troubles will come; but the Lord will deliver the godly out of them all. Tribulation will be our portion, but in Christ we shall have peace. Perhaps we shall go home this year; if we are to do so, let it not cause us even so much as one single fear, but let us put that into the song, and bless the Lord for gates of pearl and harps of gold, so soon to be the heritage of his unworthy children.

III. Now I must be brief on the other points; but I want to

delay a minute or two on the third head, which is AN APPROPRIATE COMMENCEMENT: "From this time forth."

When is the time to begin to praise God? *Now*, brethren, *now:* "From this time forth." You see, it was just then that the heathen were saying, "Where is their God?" *When God is blasphemed by others*, then let his people praise him. Whenever you hear anything said against God, any note of blasphemy or scepticism, then say, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth." Always feel as if you were called upon to make some recompense to the blessed name for the dishonour which the adversary has done to it. I think there will be less swearing in the world if we always do that, for the devil will tell his children to leave off when he finds that every time they curse we bless God all the more. Whenever you hear that a bad book has come out, whenever you hear that some scientific man has been saying something that will mislead the unwary, say, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth. We will have a new song because of that. We will make some kind of amends to God's great name because of all the calumny that is cast upon it."

So let us do it *whenever we have a sense of mercy*. He hath been mindful of us: therefore, from this time forth, will we praise his name. Do you feel as if he had done great things for you, whereof you are glad? Is your heart leaping to-night because of some special mercy? Then let this be your sweet resolve, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth."

I think that we ought to praise the Lord *from the first moment in which we know our sins are forgiven*, the first moment in which we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and then *from every period of spiritual enjoyment*. You who are about to be baptized may well say, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth, from the time when we come forward to confess our faith in Jesus, when we put on Christ by public profession of allegiance to him." From every season of coming to the communion-table, from every hallowed night of wrestling prayer, from every time you climb the mountain of transfiguration, and behold your Master's glory, ay, and from every Gethsemane's night, when you strive almost in vain to watch with him one hour, even then say, "From this time forth we will bless him."

I am sure that I may claim that *the beginning of another year* is a good time to begin blessing the Lord. For the mercies of another year, the forgiveness of another year, the provision, the instruction, the guidance, the supplies of another year, for the mercies of the year on which we enter with good heart of hope, for all our fears which have been averted, for all our hopes which have been fulfilled, for all that we have learned, for all that we have experienced, let us carry out this happy resolution that, from this time forth, we will bless the Lord.

Oh, how I wish that I could put this resolution into the hearts of some people whom I know! I hope they are Christians; but, you know, they were born on a bleak day, and they always speak with lips of frost. You are never many minutes with them but you hear grievous complaining. Dear brother, how would it do for you to say, "From this time forth I will bless the Lord"? We do know some

who, like myself, are depressed by this horrible wintry weather. We get to feel all our bones aching, and we are very apt, when we are full of rheumatism, to begin to talk about it. Come, my sister, come, my brother, let us have done with that theme, and say, "From this time forth we will bless the Lord." I know the style of talk that is very frequent: "Never was there such a dull time for trade. Business is worse than ever I knew it. Everything is going to the bad. There are wars and rumours of wars, and the world is coming to an end, and I do not know what is not going to happen." Well, brother, if you like that strain, you must keep on at it; but as for me, and you, too, I really think that it would be better if we were both to say, "From this time forth we will bless the Lord." We have strummed away long enough on that sackbut; let us begin to play on the psaltery, and the harp of a solemn sound. We have too long been singing,—

"Lord, what a wretched land is this,
That yields us no supply!
No cheering fruits, no wholesome trees,
Nor streams of living joy.
But pricking thorns through all the ground,
And mortal poisons grow;
And all the rivers that are found
With dangerous waters flow."

Let us go on to the next verse, and sing,—

"Yet the dear path to thine abode
Lies through this horrid land.
Lord, we would keep the heavenly road,
And run at thy command!"

Let us begin to sing of the path, and the Guide, and the home to which we are going. We are a day's march nearer home, a year's march nearer home; so from this time forth let us bless the Lord.

IV. And then comes, lastly, AN EVERLASTING CONTINUANCE: "We will bless the Lord from this time forth *and for evermore.*"

I was born in a county where there were many old-fashioned people, and I am old-fashioned myself; and whenever I read my Bible, and find that it says "everlasting" or "evermore", I believe that it means what it says. Of course, I have lived in a world in which I am informed that it does not mean anything of the kind, that it means a very short period, or a period longer or shorter according as circumstances may happen. I am afraid I shall never learn this new lingo; I never mean to try to learn it, so I am sure that I never shall be able to understand things the wrong way upwards, as the wise men now do. "Everlasting" will be everlasting with me for ever and ever, I can tell you; and it will find me, at any rate, a believer in eternity as being that which never has an end. I believe that those who think differently will have to come round to the opinion that I have found in the Word of God. At any rate, if we are to agree, they will have to do so; for I shall never come round to their view.

Now, then, the expression, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore," means that *our praise shall have no end to it.*

"For evermore," means eternity, I believe; and I pray God that we may make it to mean eternity in our praise "from this time forth and for evermore." Falling from grace shall not come in to make us cease praising and blessing the Lord. We began to praise him, not in the strength of nature, but in the strength of grace; and that strength will not exhaust itself, for it will be renewed day by day, so that we shall be able to bless the Lord for evermore.

Death itself shall not stop us from blessing God; nay, it shall but increase the choir, and sweeten the harmony. We shall love the Lord more, and praise him better, when death shall have divested us of these tongues which now are impediments to the highest praise, and shall have given us the power to speak without lips and tongues, in a nobler language, before the throne of God.

"My God, I'll praise thee while I live,
And praise thee when I die,
And praise thee when I rise again,
And to eternity."

Dear brethren in Christ, if we are in the right state of heart, *there is not a time when we could leave off blessing the Lord.* When shall we cease to bless him? When he leaves off blessing us? That will never be. When we leave off being in debt to him? That can never be. When he ceases to be worthy of blessing? That cannot be. Or when the life of grace within us ceases to recognize his blessedness? That also cannot be, for it shall be in us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Leave off praising him? O brothers, sisters, never, never, never, not even for the time in which a clock might tick once! Go on praising him, if he shall take you up to the bed of sickness, if every limb shall be a mass of pain, if every nerve shall be a highway for a crowd of pains to travel on; yet still go on blessing and praising and magnifying him, for this is his due. When we have praised him best and most, we have not given him what he deserves. Let us fill this house of prayer with our praise and thanksgiving to-night. The Romanist sets his incense on fire, and fills the whole place with the smoke thereof. Oh, let there go up to God from our grateful hearts a cloud of the smoke of praise unto his blessed name! Blessed be the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, from this time forth and for evermore!

If any man cannot join in that praise, let him recollect that he is not fit to live, nor fit to die; for to die without praising God, and to rise again, would be to remain in a state in which he could not possibly enter heaven, since the one occupation of heaven is magnifying and blessing and praising the Lord for ever and for ever. Let such an one seek the Lord now; let him trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he shall be saved, and he will be able to join us in saying, "We will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the Lord."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXV.

Verses 1—3. *Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.*

It was very natural that the heathen should say, "Where is their God?" because they had no outward emblem, no visible image, no tangible token; whereas the heathen had their gods many, such as they were, made of wood and stone; so that they asked, "Where is their God?" I think that when that question is suggested, it is a good sign, for it proves the purity of the faith which has cleansed itself from outward symbolism. May men often have to ask of us, "Where is their God?"

But I fear that the people of Israel were brought into so low a state, at times, that this question was also asked in scorn and derision, "Where is *now* their God?" "He was with them when they came out of Egypt; he was with them when they captured Canaan; he has been with them in many a terrible battle, turning to flight the armies of the aliens; but where is *now* their God?" It is a cutting question under such circumstances. It was so with the psalmist when he said, "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

"But our God is in the heavens:" where their gods never were. "He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased:" the gods of the heathen have done nothing; they cannot do anything.

4—7. *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.*

It is a grim piece of sarcasm which the psalmist here aims at the idol gods. I do not know, sometimes, whether this is not all that superstition deserves of us, to be utterly laughed at and put to scorn. The spirit of Elijah is not altogether the most Christlike; and yet even the Christian may well say to the priests of Baal, in derision and contempt, "Cry aloud, for he is a god." What do they deserve who so degrade themselves as to worship things which their own hands have made, things which can be seen with the eye, and touched with the hand? Yet, even in this country, we have thousands, who call themselves Christians, who prostrate themselves before idols made in different forms and shapes; yea, and say to a piece of bread that the baker made, "This is our god." Well says the psalmist:—

8. *They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

They are as doltish and as stupid, as blind and as deaf, and as ridiculous as the gods that they make; for no man was ever better than the god he worshipped.

9—11. *O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.*

There is real help in the living Jah, Jehovah, real protection in him.

12. *The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us;*

There is a new year's motto for you. It will go back through the old year, and forward into the new one: "The Lord hath been mindful of us: he will bless us." See how mindful he has been of us all through the

past year in a thousand ways. Long before we have known our wants, he has supplied them. He has delivered us from dangers of which we never knew; and led us into mercies of which we never dreamed.

12, 13. *He will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron. He will bless them that fear the* LORD, *both small and great.*

Great blessings for small people, and not small blessings for those whom he maketh great in Israel.

14, 15. *The* LORD *shall increase you more and more, you and your children. Ye are blessed of the* LORD *which made heaven and earth.*

This is the Creator's blessing, therefore a real one. Many of you have had the new creation wrought in you: you shall live to see new heavens and a new earth.

16. *The heaven, even the heavens, are the* LORD'S: *but the earth hath he given to the children of men.*

And they seem as if they meant to keep it, too. The sad thing is, that they get the earth into their hearts, and so they miss the blessing which the Lord intended them to receive from his gift of it.

17. *The dead praise not the* LORD, *neither any that go down into silence.*

As far as this world is concerned, no note is heard from the grave.

18. *But we will bless the* LORD *from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the* LORD.

So let us do to-night. Let us have an extra psalm of praise to the Lord who has brought us safely through another year.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1,039, 118 (Song I), 116 (Song III), and the Doxology.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 8TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 Corinthians ix. 15.

IF you will read, at home, the chapter from which our text is taken, you will find that Paul was stirring up the Corinthians to an act of liberality. He had boasted of what they would do, and he had just a little fear that they might fall behind, and not quite come up to what he had promised on their behalf. He stirred them up to liberal giving, telling them that they that sowed liberally should reap liberally, and they that sowed sparingly would reap sparingly. Once upon that theme of giving, the apostle could not help speaking of another gift. He saw a track just off the main road, and he felt that it led him straight away to his God, and to his Saviour; and so, while the ink was yet flowing in his pen, he began to write about it as though he would say, "I am not thinking now, my brethren, so much of your gifts as I am of another gift; not so much of your gifts to the Lord's poor people as of the Lord's great gift to you, *his* poor people. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

A person, who was collecting for some good object, called upon a friend one day; and, as he wanted him to be very generous, pleaded hard with him. After a while, he seemed to quit the subject altogether, and he said, "I knew your father." "Did you?" "Yes, and I called upon him about a certain business, just as I do upon you, and your father did not want any prompting. He said, 'State the case,' and as soon as the case was stated, he pulled out his purse, and gave me ten times as much as I had expected to obtain from him." You see, our friend was not exactly pleading with the son when he told that story, and yet I do not know how he could have pleaded better; for reverence for his father's name, and the desire not to seem to fall off from his father's standard, were the very best arguments that could have been used with him. So I admire the wisdom of Paul. When he would bring these Corinthians up to a high standard of liberality towards their poor brethren in Judæa, he says, as though it were only by the way, "Thanks be unto God, your Father and my

Father, for his unspeakable gift. Whatever you give, I can speak about; but what he gave, surpasses all powers of speech. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Now, this text to-night gives me three things to speak of. The first is, that *Christ is a gift;* and, secondly, that *as a gift, Christ is unspeakable;* and, thirdly, that *as a gift unspeakable, Christ calls forth praise to God from us.*

I. First, then, CHRIST IS A GIFT.

How often you hear people speak about Christ and his salvation as though they were the reward of merit, as though we did something by which to win his divine favour! If they do not teach that salvation comes through our own doings; yet, according to them, it is the effect of our feelings and our experiences. Somehow or other, according to this common notion, we must get fit to receive God's gift; and thus, what comes to us is more our due than an alms of heavenly charity. I hesitate not to say that this teaching flies in the teeth of the entire Word of God. Everywhere in the Scriptures, the great word is not merit, but grace; not deserving, but receiving freely of the great mercy of our God.

Our Lord Jesus must be a gift to us if we are ever to possess him. He could only come to us sons of men by way of gift. *Consider the dignity of his person* for a minute, and then ask how it is conceivable that we could have deserved that such a person as he should come here, and live and die, that we might be saved. I can conceive of a man meriting this or that honour among his fellow-men; but when I think of the Prince of life, the Lord of glory, equal with the Father, King of kings and Lord of lords, very God of very God, and when I see him giving himself up to die for men, my very blood boils at the thought that we could ever have deserved that sacrifice. One is indignant that human pride should dare to go the length of even imagining that a life of perfection could have deserved to be rewarded by the gift of Christ. Nay, my brethren, if we had kept God's law without a flaw, if there had been no omission of duty, and no commission of sin, and we could have taken the compound merits of a perfect world, and laid them at the feet of God, they could not have deserved that Christ should become man, that Christ should live in poverty, that Christ should die in shame for man. There would have been no need of Christ's death if man had not sinned; but had there been a supposable need, Christ's sacrifice could not have been deserved even if we had remained innocent, like our first parents in the Garden of Eden, before the Fall. I am sure that none of you could, for a minute, tolerate the thought that any human merit should deserve the incarnation of God upon this earth, the coming of the Divine Son in our nature into this world, and his shameful death upon the cross of Calvary.

But, next, this will be very evident from *the nature of the work for which Christ was given.* It is clear from the Scriptures that he was given for the undeserving. He came into the world to save sinners. He took upon himself, not our righteousness, for there was none for him to take; but, as we read just now, "the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The prominent and paramount idea of Christ in

the Scripture is that of a Priest offering sacrifice; but the Priest is for men who need atonement for their sins; the expiation, the sacrifice, the sin-offering, is for guilty men. How could Christ die on the cross for deserving men? The idea is absurd! No bruises were required for those who needed not to be healed. There needed to be no chastisement of peace for those who deserved well of God. The very work of Christ in dying, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," implies that we were at a distance from God. It also implies our injustice; and, consequently, our total inability to deserve such a gift at God's hand. No, no; a Saviour is for sinners; a dying Saviour must be for those who deserved to die. Christ does not come, therefore, to us as deserving him; but he is God's unspeakable gift.

And let us think of *the splendour of his grace*, the lavish wealth of blessing which comes to us through him. Know ye not that as many of you as have believed in Christ are made to live with an everlasting life? There pulses in you to-night the life of eternity, the life of heaven. You have begun to live the life that shall last for ever and ever. Know ye not that ye have been regenerated by the Holy Ghost, adopted into the family of God? You are the children of the Most High. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Did you deserve this? Could you deserve this? Is it possible? Being adopted into the heavenly family, you have been justified, made just in the sight of God; and now you know that you are loved with an everlasting love, that you are predestinated to glorify God here, by being conformed to the image of his Son, that you are ordained by divine decree to sit upon a throne which he has prepared for you, and to reign with him for ever and ever. Did you deserve this? Can it be conceived that anything you have ever done could have been rewarded with such extraordinary boons as these? A boy runs an errand for me, and I give him twopence, or, if I am generous, I give him sixpence; but if I were to give him a thousand pounds, he would not believe that it was a payment for his service, he would not think that possible; he would feel that the reward was far above anything that he had earned, that his service was quite unworthy of so great a gift, and he would conclude that if that great sum of money was really his, I must have given it to him out of pure generosity. He would never dream that he had earned it, even supposing that he had done his errand with all the diligence in the world. And no child of God, however much he has served his Lord, ever thinks that he deserves to be a child of God, that he deserves to be an heir of heaven, that he deserves to be a priest and a king, to live for ever at God's right hand in untold blessedness. Oh, no, all this must be a gift; we could not have earned such a blessing as this.

You know that there are two things to make a gift; there cannot be a gift without, first of all, one to give it, and then another to receive it. Have you received Christ? It is essential to make him a gift to you that you should accept him. It is little enough that you should take into your empty hand the priceless treasure that God bestows. It is little enough that, like an empty cup, you should stand under the flowing spring, and let the crystal stream flow in; but it is

necessary in order to complete the gift. I will not ask you to thank God for his unspeakable gift unless, God having given, you also have received. You may receive Christ, oh, so freely! If salvation were to be bought, if it were to be earned, woe would be unto you; but being a gift, nothing is freer. The poorest man in the world may accept a gift; a trembling hand may receive a gift; he that is a thief and a robber, ay, a murderer, doomed to die, may accept a gift, if it comes not of merit, or by way of reward, but entirely of the generosity of the bestower. Oh, what a glorious thing it is that you and I and all of us may receive God's unspeakable gift!

Once received and accepted, Christ is ours. If a man has made a gift to me, I would not say anything that would hurt his feelings, but it is not his any more. If he has given it to me, it is mine. A person once handed over to me a house that was to belong to a certain part of the work that I had to conduct, and if I had taken possession of that house when it was given to me, it would have been mine; but I did not. The person died; and though I held the deeds and writings, yet the gift was invalid by the law of mortmain. Had I taken possession when the house was handed to me, it would have been mine; but as the case stood, it was not mine. I must, if I had taken possession, have said to the person giving the house, "You must go out of it, or you must pay me rent, however nominal it may be, to acknowledge that this is really mine, and that you have given it over to me." But I could not have asked such a thing as that, or even dreamed of doing so, therefore the gift was void, and the house was not mine for the Lord's cause. Now, dear friend, if you accept the gift that God gives, remember that it will be yours, Christ will be yours, eternal life will be yours. You will have the title-deeds of your inheritance; you will stand possessed of it. But do not put that off till death, I pray you. No; take possession now of that Christ whom God gives over to you to be his gift to you, and your possession for ever.

And I will say one more thing. When once you receive this gift, you will never lose it, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," which means that God never repents that he has given this unspeakable gift. He will never say, "You must let me have that again." If God has given thee Christ, and thou hast accepted him, he is thine for ever. And this is the glory of this divine gift. A possession that I may lose, is a very poor possession after all. A suit at law may be brought against me, and I may lose what I thought was mine. I would not like to have such a possession as that; I could not go to sleep at night through fear that I should lose it; but if God has given me Christ, and I have taken Christ, he is mine. Nor death, nor hell, nor aught else, shall ever be able to separate the soul from Christ, or Christ from the soul that has accepted him. It was well spoken, "Christ and a crust, ay, Christ and no crust, would be better than all the world without him." Oh! give me Christ, and let me die, sooner than let me live without Christ; for that cannot be truly called life which is without him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

I know that some of you have been straining after doing something

or being something in order to obtain God's unspeakable gift. Will you have it? Will you have it for nothing? Do not insult God by bringing your poor wretched merits as the purchase-money for his free gift of Christ. Come just as you are, and freely take what he freely gives, and Christ is yours for ever.

I was surprised, the other day, when I found that a poor soul in deep despair had obtained comfort from a sermon of mine, not upon the universal redemption of men, nor upon the free offer of salvation, but the man had laid hold of the sharp angular points of a sermon upon the everlasting covenant and upon election. When I heard of it, I saw how God can give a soul comfort simply by the exhibition of his sovereign grace. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." O soul, if thou wilt have Christ as a gift, thou mayest have him to-night! You need not go home; you need not wait a moment. But if you will not have him as a gift, you shall never have him, for in no other way can Christ ever belong to thee and me, except as God's gift which we, by his grace, are led freely to accept.

Thus much, and perhaps too much, considering our time, on the first point, that Christ is a gift, the free gift of God's grace.

II. Now, in the second place, let us consider the fact that, AS A GIFT, CHRIST IS UNSPEAKABLE. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," said the apostle Paul; and so say we. "Why," says one, "do you speak about him, then?" Well, principally because he is unspeakable. By this time, after nearly nineteen hundred years, if the theme we have to preach about were speakable, we should have exhausted it; but as it is unspeakable, a sea without a shore, an ocean without a bottom, we will keep on preaching for another nineteen hundred years, if the Lord does not come, and we shall never get to the end of this theme, I am quite sure. I heard of a minister who explained to one of his hearers what a trouble it was for him to get a sermon. "Oh!" said he, "it takes me days, and makes my head ache, and I do not know what to do." "Sir," his friend replied, "if it is like that, I should think you must be near the bottom of the tub." And I should think so, too. But when *we* come to speak about Christ, we have an unspeakable subject. Here is a well springing up that overflows, and we can speak for ever upon this unspeakable theme.

How is it unspeakable? First, *he who spake best of Christ declared that he was unspeakable.* Do you know anybody who spoke better of Christ than Paul did, inspired as he was? What majestic sentences, what wonderful paragraphs you come across in Paul's writing, where he piles up his words, mountain upon mountain, in order to glorify Christ! If anybody could have spoken Christ out from Alpha to Omega, and told all about him, Paul was the man; but though he did not give up the blessed task, but lived and died at it, he declared that God's gift was unspeakable, and I am sure it is so.

Next, *he who needs a Saviour most will tell you that Christ is God's unspeakable gift.* You know that man. He sits down in the deep distress of his soul, with his hand to his heavy head; but he cannot lay his hand on his heavy heart. It would break his arm to try to hold that up. Laden with guilt, and full of fears, he says, "There is no

salvation for me but by Christ. Oh, that I could get Christ! Oh, that I could get Christ! It would be an unspeakable blessing if I could but believe in Christ." I know one who talked like this to his mother, the other night. "Why, John," said she, "you look very miserable! You look as if you had the whole world hanging on you." "Mother," he replied, "I could better bear the whole world with Christ than live without him." When a man thus feels his need of Christ, he knows that Christ is God's unspeakable gift.

When you receive Christ, you will find that *he who enjoys him most feels him to be an unspeakable gift.* When we do not enjoy Christ much, we can talk like parrots about his charms; but when we get our souls full of Christ, generally we cannot talk at all about him. The man who feels that Christ is his, that he is saved, and that Christ has filled him full of heavenly treasures, and made him to possess all things, such a man as that, when he begins to try to talk about Christ, gets choked up. The tears are in his eyes. "Oh!" says he, "let me go home, let me get alone, and sit down, and quietly think this subject out, for it is altogether unspeakable." He who thinks that he could tell all that he knows about Christ, may also conclude that he does not know much, for he who knows most of him feels that he is God's unspeakable gift.

And, beloved, *he who has used Christ most and used him longest will tell you this.* At first, Christ is everything to the new-born soul in one direction. By-and-by, he is everything in another direction; and, in the end, Christ is everything in every direction. Tell me, my grey-headed friend, what thinkest thou of Christ? If thou hast known him fifty years, at what is Christ best, man? "Best?" say you, "he is best at everything;" and so, indeed, he is. And to what use dost thou put Christ, my brother, in the midst of the battle of life? Dost thou find Christ good as a helmet, breastplate, shoes, or girdle? "Oh!" say you, "he is good as a full armour. All I want I find in Christ, yea, more than all." It would be impossible to tell all the uses to which Christ is put. You who have used him most and longest will say, "He is unspeakably precious to us, for he has been good to us in sickness and in health, in poverty and in wealth, in joy and in depression. He is equally good everywhere. Oh, that we might still go on to know more of him, for as God's great gift to us he is unspeakable!"

Again, *the preacher who has preached him most fully knows that Christ is unspeakable.* Ah, dear friends! I do not suppose that you can understand the feeling that comes over me at times. I have sometimes had glorious liberty in preaching; I have felt like Naphtali, a hind let loose; and I have talked away of my Master to my own joy, and I think to yours, too; and then, when I have been on my way home, I have begun asking myself, "Now, how did you preach, after all?" and it has seemed to me a poor, miserable affair. I have said so little in honour of my Master compared with what I ought to have said, that I have felt half inclined to come back here, and begin again, only the thought has often struck me, "You will do it worse if you go back, so that you had better let it alone as it is." I know a man, an eminent painter, and a person sat to him thirteen times for his

portrait, and the artist could not catch the sitter's expression. I saw him throw his brush right into the middle of the painting, and he said, "I give it up; I cannot do it." That is how we sometimes feel with regard to our Master. Who can paint HIM as he ought to be painted? We give it up. Go, sir, and look at the sun, and then come back, and paint the sun upon thy canvas; and then go, and look at Christ, and express him by thy speech. Nature, all nature together,—

"To make his beauties known,
Must mingle colours not her own."

He who preaches Christ most fully knows that he is unspeakable. You did well to sing just now the verse that I often repeat to myself concerning my own preaching,—

"Vex'd, I try and try again,
Still my efforts all are vain;
Living tongues are dumb at best,
We must die to speak of Christ."

I have come so far, and reached my last point. I wish that we had more time for such a glorious theme.

III. Now, thirdly, AS A GIFT UNSPEAKABLE, CHRIST CALLS FORTH PRAISE TO GOD FROM US. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

The gift of Christ makes us *view God with thankfulness.* Never fall into the mistake that is often made by ignorant persons, when they suppose that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to make God loving. No, no, no; Jesus Christ came into the world because God was loving, and in love to us gave his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us.

"'Twas not to make Jehovah's love
Towards the sinner flame,
That Jesus, from his throne above,
A suffering man became.
'Twas not the death which he endured,
Nor all the pangs he bore,
That God's eternal love procured,
For God was love before;"

and he so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son. God's unspeakable gift is not the cause of his love, but the fruit of his love. Do not say, "Thanks be unto Christ for dying to placate the Father." No, no! "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." God gave his Son, and we adore the Giver, and bless his name. Once we thought of God with dread; but now that he has given us Jesus, we think of him with thankfulness. We are glad that there is a God. It is no question with us whether there is a God or not. If there were no God, it were eternal ruin to us; but because there is a God, there is heaven for us, nay, our God is our heaven, blessed be his name! Thus, we think of God with thankfulness.

And notice, next, that we ought to *express that thankfulness.* The apostle says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." But, Paul, what brought you to that topic? You were talking to these Corinthians about giving, not grudgingly, as of necessity, and so on;

what brought you to the subject of God's unspeakable gift? Paul answers, "It is impossible to say what brought me to this topic, for I am always at it. Whatever I am talking about, whatever business I have on hand, I am always thanking God for his unspeakable gift." The apostle broke out into that burst of praise because he could not help it. His soul was swelling with intense gratitude, and he was obliged to cry out, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."

Dear friends, praising God is never out of season and never out of place. You know that some of us, who profess to be Christians, are the most orderly and proper people in all the world; that is to say, we never intrude our religion upon other people. We can see a man for twenty years, and yet never say a word to him about Christ. We do not have those dreadful people crying out "Hallelujah" in the service, do we? We are so dreadfully proper! Besides that, we are dreadfully cold as well. Perhaps we should speak about Christ very imprudently, and do some very rash things if we loved him better; but we love him so little that we become wonderfully prudent, and wonderfully proper, and we and the world jog on together as if there were no difference between us. If a man does roll out an oath now and then, we are very sorry, but we never rebuke him. Of course not. Ah! well, I wish that we could be at least as rash as one old man who was employed at a wharf unloading. He was weakly and sickly, and so they gave him less pay than others received, and he was quite content. But there was a stevedore who one morning swore at him, and the old man bowed his head, but said nothing. The blasphemer swore again, and the old man bowed his head again. At last the swearer said, "You old fool, what are you bowing to me for?" The good man replied, "I was not bowing to you, but you named the name of God, and I thought that I would pay him reverence if you did not." Well done, old man! Well done, old man! May every Christian here find out some way of thanking God for his unspeakable gift! The more the world curses, the more let us bless. We are to express our thanks as well as to feel grateful.

Our expression of thankfulness for God's unspeakable gift would *make ourselves all the surer that Christ is ours.* A man who has received a gift, and never looks at it, and never thanks the giver, will come by degrees to forget that he has it, or to forget the giver, and to forget how he came by it. Cultivate a grateful spirit when you think of what a gift you have in Christ. Praise the Lord for Christ. Then you will want to praise him again; and when you have praised him again, you will want to praise him yet again; and the more you praise him, the more sure you will be that he is really yours. Suppose that a man has a garden, and that he knows it is his; he is quite sure it is his. But suppose that for twenty years he has always gathered all the fruit of the garden, and lived upon it. Then nobody can question his right; he has the right of possession, the right of enjoyment. He received his garden as a gift, and for the last twenty years he has thanked the giver of it. I am sure that his title is clear enough. Oh, how some of you would clear your titles if you praised God more! Your very praising and blessing him would be a re-examination of your title-deeds; and your confidence would grow to full assurance.

You would not only know that you had received God's unspeakable gift; but you would also know why you had received it.

Lastly, we are to *wish for the spread of such thankfulness.* If we are in the right frame of mind, we shall not only ourselves say, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift," but we shall mean what Paul meant, let everybody else who has received this unspeakable gift praise God for it. Brothers, let us thank God! Sisters, let us praise the Lord! I remember being at a Primitive Methodist meeting, where they sang a hymn beginning,—

> "Come, soldiers, can't you rise and tell
> The wonders of Immanuel?
> Yes, bless the Lord, we can rise and tell,
> The wonders of Immanuel."

There was a very lively chorus to the hymn, and those Methodists did sing it, too. It ran like this,—

> "All glory to the Lamb of God,
> Who purchased us with atoning blood!
> We soon shall pass over Jordan's flood,
> And join the saved in glory!"

I learned a lesson in praise, the other morning. I think it was a little after five o'clock, when I was just waking, I heard a blackbird come, and chirp a note or two close by my window. After a minute or two, a thrush also began to sing; and when the two together became fairly awake, they were not satisfied until they had aroused all the chaffinches, and goldfinches, and sparrows. So they chirped away and sang on until they awoke every bird near my house. What an oratorio of praise the bird musicians gave forth! They never had to look to their paper to see whether they kept to the score; but each one did keep to the score, and they rose higher and higher and higher in their exultant songs to the God of day, who had chased the night away, and given them light once more in the morning. Now I am the blackbird that would start the praise to-night. There are birds of all sorts here, of different colours, and varying plumages, and able to sing all manner of notes. Let us join together to give the Lord an evening song as those birds gave him a morning song, and let this be the key-note, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Before I dismiss those who are not going to remain for the communion, let us all sing,—

> "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
> Praise him, all creatures here below,
> Praise him above, ye heavenly host,
> Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH LIII.

Mr. Moody was once asked whether his creed was in print. In his own prompt way, he replied, "Yes, sir; you will find it in the fifty-third of Isaiah." A condensed Bible is in this chapter. You have the whole gospel here.

Verse 1. *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the* LORD *revealed?*

Nobody ever does believe either prophets or preachers except through the work of God's Spirit and grace. The Lord's arm must be revealed, or else the truth proclaimed by his servants will never be accepted. All the prophets speak in these words of Isaiah, as if they all stood together, and lifted up this wail, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

2. *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*

This is Israel's King, the long-promised Messiah; yet when he comes to Bethlehem, see what "a tender plant" he is! Look at the house of David, almost extinct; and see what "a root out of a dry ground" is—

"The stem of Jesse's rod."

When Jesus comes before the sons of men, dressed in the garb of a peasant, a poor man, a sorrowful man, a man who had not where to lay his head, notice how men say, by their actions, if not in words, "There is no beauty that we should desire him."

3. *He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

We rightly sing,—

"Rejected and despised of men,
Behold a man of woe!
And grief his close companion still
Through all his life below!

"We held him as condemn'd of heaven,
An outcast from his God;
While for our sins he groan'd, he bled,
Beneath his Father's rod."

His own people, ay, his own chosen ones, turned away from him; and you and I did so till God's grace changed our hearts, and opened our eyes. But why was he "despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"? Why was the Prince of Israel such a suffering man? He had no sin for which to be chastened. There was no evil in his nature that needed to be fetched out with the rod of correction. Oh, no! The answer is very different:—

4, 5. *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

What a joyous note there is in that sorrowful line, "With his stripes we are healed"! Glory be to God, we are healed of our soul-sickness, cured

of the disease of sin, by this strange surgery, not by stripes upon ourselves, but by stripes upon our Lord!

6. *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the* LORD *hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

The general sin of the race, the special sin of the individual, all gathered, heap upon heap, mountain upon mountain, and laid by God on Christ. We sometimes sing,—

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all and frees us
From the accursed load.
I bring my guilt to Jesus,
To wash my crimson stains
White in his blood most precious,
Till not a spot remains;"

and I will find no fault with that hymn; but the real laying of sin upon Jesus was effected by God himself: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

7. *He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*

He never pleaded for himself. At the earthly judgment-seat, he said not a word for himself, so that even Pilate "marvelled greatly." Oh, the eloquence of that silence! Truly it was golden. Omnipotence restrained omnipotence. Christ held himself in as with bit and bridle. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."

8, 9. *He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

Therefore he was allowed to be buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. He was no felon, whose body must be cast out to the kites and jackals; but "He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

10. *Yet it pleased the* LORD *to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the* LORD *shall prosper in his hand.*

Wicked men slew our Lord, and their crime was the blackest in the world's history; but, unconsciously, they were carrying out "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God": "It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief."

Christ died for others, but he lives again; and through him a godly seed shall live for ever and ever: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." He is made to prosper because he died.

11. *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied:*

His death-pangs were birth-pangs: "the travail of his soul." He sees the multitude that shall be born through his death, and he is content.

11. *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many;*

Dear hearer, will he justify you? Do you know him? If you know

him so as to trust him, he has justified you; you are a justified man to-night. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."

11. *For he shall bear their iniquities.*

They kick against this doctrine nowadays. They cannot bear it; yet it is the very marrow of the gospel, Christ bearing sin that was not his own, that we might be covered with a righteousness which is not our own, but comes from him. Paul, by the Spirit, put this great truth thus, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

12. *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Thanks be unto God for this great sacrifice!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 793, 233, and the Doxology.

A REQUEST.

Will each person who reads this notice kindly DEVOTE ONE HALF HOUR every month in helping to increase the circulation of Mr. Spurgeon's Sermons and *The Sword and the Trowel*? In this short space of time, many additional readers might be easily obtained, and much good might result.

The following personal note, by Mrs. C. H. SPURGEON, appears in the current issue of the Magazine:—

"All readers of *The Sword and the Trowel*, who think, with me, that the late beloved Editor's own Magazine should prosper for his dear sake, and flourish in tender memory of his lovely life, can easily fulfil their own desire by the simple means of introducing it to their friends, and inducing some to become subscribers for the coming year. What a difference this would at once make in its circulation!

"The present Editor has stores of good things from the beloved one's pen to lay before us, and loving pains are taken to carry on the Magazine in the way *he* would approve and commend. All the institutions he founded and loved are represented in these pages, so that their progress and prosperity can be watched, and aided, and rejoiced over by all who are interested therein. *Personally*, I shall be gladdened and encouraged by knowing that a hearty, sympathetic welcome is accorded to these pages."

A packet of Prospectuses will be sent, post free, on application.

A PERMANENT CABINET PHOTOGRAPH OF THE LATE PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON will be given away with the Monthly Part of the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, published January 31st, 1893. Price 6d.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

"DARE TO BE A DANIEL."

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 15TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."—Daniel i. 8.

VERY much of our future life will depend upon our earliest days. I like a remark of Mr. Ruskin's, that I remember to have read, though I cannot quote it verbatim. He says, "People often say, 'We excuse the thoughtlessness of youth,'" but he says, "No, it never ought to be excused. I had far rather hear of thoughtless old age, when a man has done his work; but what excuse can be found for a thoughtless youth? The time for thought is at the beginning of life, and there is no period which so much demands, or so much necessitates, thoughtfulness as our early days." I would that all young men would think so. They say that they must sow their "wild oats." No, no; my dear young friend, think before you sow such seed as that, and remember what the reaping will be. See whether there is not better corn to be found than wild oats, and try to sow that. Then think how you will sow it, and when you will sow it; for, if you do not think about the sowing,—

"What will the harvest be?"

If there is any time when the farmer should think, it is surely in the early stages of the ploughing and the sowing. If he does not think then, it will be of small avail for him to think afterwards.

Daniel was a young man, and he did think. It was his glory that he so thought that he came to a purpose, and he purposed, not with a kind of superficial "I will," but he "purposed in his heart", and gave his whole self to a certain definite purpose which he deliberately formed. He was a young man, he was also a captive; and that rendered it the more remarkable that he should come to such a decision. He had been stolen away from his father's house, and carried into a foreign land; and you know what men say, "When you are in Rome, you must do as Rome does." But here was a young man in Babylon, who would not do what Babylon did; a youth in a king's court, who would not eat what the king ate, or drink what the king drank; a

captive, whose very name had been changed in order to make him forget his country and his God, for the change in name, as I told you in the reading, was meant to be significant of a change in religion.

But, though they might change Daniel's name, they could not change his nature, nor would he give up anything that he believed to be right. Captive as he was, he had a right royal soul; and he was as free in Babylon as he had been at Jerusalem, and he determined to keep himself so, for he "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Oh, that we had a multitude of young men who knew how to put their feet down! We have a great number now who are watching to see where to put their foot down, and they will try to put it down, not where it is most solid ground, but where it is most turfy, and easy, and soft to the feet. May God give us back the old grit that used to be in old-fashioned Christians, to whom custom was nothing, but God's Word was everything; to whom it mattered not whether it brought loss or gain, but they did the right, and followed the right, cost what it might!

Now, it was because Daniel, while yet a youth, a captive, a student, was so decided in what he did, that his after-life became so bright. He would never have been called "a man greatly beloved" if he had not been made by grace a youth greatly decided; neither would he have continued to the reign of Cyrus, as we read just now, if he had not stood firm in the reign of Nebuchadnezzar. You shall read the evening of life in the morning of life, and you shall decide what your evening is to be by what your morning is. God help you, who are beginning life; for, if God begins with you, and you begin with God, your life will be one of happy usefulness, which will have a truly blessed end!

I am going to talk just now, not so much about Daniel, as about the whole subject of a spirit of decision in such a time as this. Our first head will be that, *there are temptations to be resisted* by us, as there were by Daniel; secondly, *there are right methods of resisting temptation*; and, thirdly, *there are certain points which will have to be proved by experience* while we are in this process of fighting against temptation.

I. THERE ARE TEMPTATIONS TO BE RESISTED. There never was a man yet who had faith, and who had not trials. Wherever there is faith in God, it will be tested at some time or other; it must be so. It cannot be that the house shall be builded, even on the rock, without the rains descending, and the floods coming, and the winds beating upon that house. Though it shall not fall, yet it shall be tried by a force that would make it fall were it not divinely sustained.

Now, first, look at Daniel's temptations. In his case, *the temptation was very specious*. He was bidden to eat the portion of food that, every day, came from the king's table. Could he want any better? And he was commanded to drink the measure of wine, generally the best in the world, that was sent from the king's table. He might have fared like a prince. Could he have any objection to that? He had no objection except this, that it would defile him. Do you understand what he meant by that? There were certain foods used by the Babylonians, such as the flesh of swine, the flesh of the hare, and of

certain fish, that were unclean, and when these came from the king's table, if Daniel ate them, he would be breaking the law of Moses as given in the Book of Leviticus, and thus he would be defiled. Remember that the food which was allowed to Israel was to be killed in a certain way. The blood must be effectually drained from the flesh, for he that ate the blood defiled himself thereby. Now, the Babylonians did not kill their beasts in that way, and the eating of flesh which had not been killed according to the law would have defiled Daniel. You know how careful the Jews are to this day with regard to the butchering of the food they eat. More than that, usually such a king as Nebuchadnezzar, before he ate food, dedicated it to his god. Bel-Merodach was greatly venerated by Nebuchadnezzar as god, so that a libation of wine was poured out to Merodach, and a certain portion of food was put aside, so that, in fact, it was offered to idols; and Daniel felt that he would be defiled if he ate of meat which might be unclean, and which was certain to be offered to idols; it would be breaking the law of God, so Daniel would not eat it.

But the temptation to do so must have been very strong, for somebody would say, "Why, what difference can it make what you eat, or what you drink?" Under the Christian dispensation it might be another matter; but under the Jewish dispensation it made a great deal of difference whether a man ate or drank certain things. Others would say, "Why is Daniel so particular? There have been other Jews here who have unhesitatingly eaten the king's meat. We read of king Jehoiakim that he had a portion every day from the king's table, and he does not seem to have made any objection. Why does this young fellow put his back up so, and make himself so odd, and so different from everybody else? There is no use in being so strict, and sticking out about little things." So the temptation came to Daniel with great speciousness.

Then, *the temptation seemed the road to honour*. To consent to eat of the king's meat, and to drink of the king's wine, seemed to be the way to get on in Babylon. They would say to Daniel, "Surely, if you begin by objecting to what the monarch sends you from his table, you will never get on at court. People with a conscience should not go to court." I do not say that to-day; but I do think that they ought not to be members of Parliament. It must be wonderfully hard for a man with a conscience to go in and out there. But for Daniel to begin with a conscience like this, so particularly tender that it was offended by a glass of the king's wine, or a morsel of the king's meat, why, any good old fatherly man would have said, "My boy, you will never get on; your religion will always stand in your way. I am sure you will never come to be much." That would have been a great mistake, however, for Daniel became a great ruler, and he prospered in the world through that very conscientiousness which it was thought would spoil all his prospects.

Somebody would whisper in Daniel's ear, "It is *the law of the land*. The king, who is supreme, has ordered that you should eat this portion, and drink this measure of wine, each day." Yes, but whatever the law may be, and whatever custom may be, the servants of God serve a higher King, and they have but one rule, and one custom,

"We ought to obey God rather than man." They are ready to be the most obedient subjects up to a certain point; but when the law of God comes in, then are they dogged to a degree of obstinacy. They can burn, but they cannot turn; they can die, but they cannot deny the law of the Lord their God.

In Daniel's case, if he had done what it was proposed to him to do, *it would have been giving up the separated life.* He felt that, if he constantly fed upon the luxurious food of the king, he would be reckoned to be a Chaldean like the king; and so, to keep up his separation as belonging to the chosen seed, of whom Balaam prophesied, "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations," Daniel would not eat of the royal fare which was provided for him. Had he done so, he would have melted into a Chaldean, and given up being an Israelite, to whom belonged the promises. This is the temptation of the present day. Profess to be a Christian, but float along the common current of the world. Take the name of a Christian, and go to your place of worship, and go through your ceremonies; but do not bring your religion into your business. Act as other people do. This is the temptation of the time: as the bulk of men think, so think you; and as the bulk of men say, so say you; and as the bulk of Christian professors talk, so talk you. This is the Satanic temptation which is wrecking our churches, and doing I wot not how much mischief to men of God. But Daniel, though tempted strongly to do like that, would not yield. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank."

Now, in our own case, what are the particular temptations to which we, as believing men and believing women, are exposed?

I cannot go into the question of individuals; but I can imagine some one here to-night who is in a position where he is asked to do what it is not right for him to do. But he says, "I shall be discharged if I refuse to do it. I know others do it, and I must do it." My dear young fellow, allow me to put before you Daniel, who purposed in his heart that he would not eat the king's meat. I talked, the other day, with a gentleman, who was the trustee for one of the wealthiest men in England, and who now is trustee of the money that the same gentleman has left to all his children. Those children have grown up, and have come to years of maturity; but they still make him the trustee, paying him for looking after all their money, which is an immense amount. I was asking him how it was that he gained the confidence of the family so that they put him in such a position where all that they have is under his care and discretion. He said that he remembered, when he was but a boy, the head of the establishment said to him one day, "Say that I am out," and he replied, "Please, sir, I could not say that, for it would not be true." Of course the master was very angry, and told him that he must not bring his scruples there, or he would never get on in life; but he never asked him to tell a lie any more, and when somebody was wanted to act as confidential clerk, that young fellow was selected; and, knowing him to be one who would be faithful and true, his master took the opportunity to raise him. and he put implicit confidence in him from

that hour. Sometimes you will find that to be out and out for the right will be the making of you. I would not urge integrity upon you from such a motive; still, since the devil will tell you that it will be the ruin of you, I will urge you to stand fast to the right, to speak the truth at all times, to be straightforward, for you will find that honesty is the best policy. Any man who speaks the truth will find it the best thing in the long run. To fence, to prevaricate, to temporize, to try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, involves you in a world of difficulty and trouble. Be straight as Daniel was. The Lord help you to be so!

But now it comes to Christian people in another way. *Some would tempt us to assist the cause of God by amusements.* Christian people are asked to go to places, well, very doubtful places, to say the least; and sometimes this evil is introduced into religion till, as one of our friends said most truly in prayer to-night, they have brought the theatre into the house of God. They have really done so, and brought back chaos and old night, primeval darkness. Oh, that God would speak again, and say, "Let there be light," and chase these things of darkness once for all away! I charge every Christian man here to make his resolve that, if others do these things, as for Daniel, he has purposed in his heart that he will not defile himself with the king's meat, or with the wine which the king drank.

So to-day, again, there is *the temptation of love for intellectual novelty.* Instead of the old, old gospel, and the old, old Book, for which God be thanked for ever, we are to place science, which is generally conjecture, in the place of revelation; and the thoughts of men are to cover and bury the sublime thoughts of God. I see ministers and churches deluded and led astray by these temptations. As for me, if no one else will say it, I purpose in my heart not to defile myself with this portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank. We need still to have old-fashioned believers who will sing the verse we sang just now,—

> "Should all the forms that men devise
> Assault my faith with treacherous art,
> I'd call them vanity and lies,
> And bind the gospel to my heart."

God send us many Daniels of that sort!

And, besides this, we have, nowadays, *the temptation to general laxity.* People do, even Christian people do, what Christian people should not do; and they excuse themselves by quoting the example of other Christians, or by saying, "We are not so precise as our fathers were." Has God changed? Is there not a text that says, "The Lord thy God is a jealous God"? Does he permit his people to sin, and take pleasure in it? And are we to forget that precept, "Be ye holy, for I am holy"? Is there to be no separation from the world, and is it no longer true that "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"? Is there no such text as this, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty"?

I pray you, brothers and sisters, now, if never before, tie everything up as tightly as you can. The storm is so heavy that you need to go now with close-reefed sails. Oh, for a Daniel's declaration that you will not defile yourself with the portion of the king's meat, or with the wine which he drank!

I could continue long at this point; but I have given you the general principle, which you can work out for yourselves. Christians have meat to eat of which the world knoweth not. We have our re-creation; that is the way to pronounce recreation, re-creation; we go to our Creator, and he makes us anew. We have our nights of holy mirth; we have our days of delight. There is a King, a portion of whose meat we rejoice to eat, and of whose wine we delight to drink; but as to questionable things, things of the world, and all that tendeth towards departure from the living God, we say that, by his grace, we determine not to defile ourselves therewith.

II. Now I come to the second point. THERE ARE RIGHT METHODS OF RESISTING TEMPTATION.

And the first is that *the heart must be set.* "Daniel purposed in his heart." He looked the matter up and down, and he settled it in his heart. Before he asked Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego anything about it, he had made up his own mind. Oh, for a made-up mind! Oh, for the man who knows how to look at his compass, and to steer his vessel whither he ought to go! God grant you grace, young man, to nail your colours to the mast, and to be determined that you will keep to the right course, come fair wind or come foul. Daniel had settled it in his heart. The grace of God is a great heart-settler. Where it comes, men become firm and positive, for the Lord teaches them to profit.

The next thing is, that *the life must be winning.* Daniel was helped in carrying out his resolution by his own personal character. God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. Whenever a man is brought into favour and tender love, and is a good man, there is something about him that has commended itself. There is a something about him that is lovable, or he would not have been loved. It is of no use for a man to say, "I have made up my mind upon certain things," and to keep doggedly fighting over those matters, while, at the same time, the whole of his life is unkind, ungenerous, and unlovable. Yes, by all manner of means be a martyr if you like; but do not martyr everybody else, for it is very possible to get so much grit in you, that you become all grit. There are some who have carried firmness into obstinacy, and determination into bigotry, which is a thing to be shunned. Yield everything that may be yielded; give up mere personal whims and oddities; but as for the things of God, stand as firm as a rock about them. God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince who was set over him; and there must have been in him a generosity and frankness and nobleness of character, which even the mighty Chaldean admired. Oh, for a grand character to support one's religious determination!

Then observe that, *the protest must be courteously borne.* While Daniel was very decided, he was very courteous in his protests. He

went to the prince, and he told him his scruples. He requested that he might not be obliged to defile himself. There are many ways of doing the same thing; and some people always select the very ugliest way of doing everything. Let us ask for wisdom and discretion in doing that which is right. Firmness of purpose should be adorned with gentleness of manner in carrying it out. It was so with young Daniel.

Next to that, *self-denial must be sought.* I do not think that Daniel had any objection to eat flesh, or to drink wine, for he evidently did both, according to other portions of this Book; but his objection was, for religious reasons, against the king's meat and the king's wine, so he said, "To make it clear that nothing that enters my lips has ever been dedicated to idols, let me have nothing to eat but pulse, lentils, beans, peas, and such like things; and for drink, let me have that of which kings do not often take much, let me have nothing but water, in order to make quite sure that I have no libation that has been offered to idols." So Daniel and his three companions denied themselves luxuries, which, perhaps, they enjoyed as much as anybody else, so as by no means to defile themselves with anything which had been associated with the Babylonian idols. If you will be out and out for God, you must expect self-denial, and you will have to habituate yourself to it. Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for loss of friendships; be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by him who bought you with his precious blood. He that should run the gauntlet of earth and hell for a thousand years, and yet hold fast his integrity, would be a gainer by all that he lost; he would gain an increase of eternal joy by all he suffered. Wherefore, I charge you, seek for the Daniel spirit.

And then *the test must be boldly put.* Daniel showed his faith when he said to Melzar, "Feed me and my three companions on this common fare; give us nothing else. We do not ask you to leave us to our plan for twelve months; try us for a short time. I do not say a day or two; but take as many days as you like. Put us to the test; and if, at the end of the appointed time, we are not all the better for our plain fare, then we will consider further; but, for the present, will you try us?" I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried; he should be pleased to let his religion be put to the test. "There," says he, "hammer away if you like." Do you want to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Do you want always to be protected from everybody's sneer and frown; and to go to heaven as if you were riding in the procession on Lord Mayor's day? Well, if so, you are very much mistaken if you think you are going to have it so. God give you courage, more and more of it, through faith in himself! May you be willing to put your religion to every proper test, the test of life, and the test of death, too!

III. Now, in closing, I want to show you that THERE ARE CERTAIN POINTS WHICH WILL HAVE TO BE PROVED BY EXPERIENCE. I speak now to you Christian people who hold fast by the old doctrines of the gospel, and who mean to hold fast by the old ways, and will not be led astray by modern temptations. Now what have you to prove?

Well, I think that you have to prove that *the old faith gives you a bright and cheerful spirit.* Really, I cannot help laughing sometimes when I see myself as some other people see me. One gentleman describes me as having "settled down into an ever-deepening gloom." It is a curious thing that I was not aware of this at all. You who know me, and with whom I mix, have you noticed this "ever-deepening gloom" falling upon me? Do I preach like a man who has lost all the joy of life, and all his comfort? I trow not. If there is a happier man beneath the skies than I am, I will not change places with him, for I am perfectly satisfied to take things as they come to me, and I am glad that he has more to rejoice in than I have. Yet I am sure I do not know what he has that I have not. I have God in heaven, I have God on earth, my heart is filled with an intense satisfaction in the firm conviction that what I believe is true, and that what I preach to you is true. I am ready to stand before the judgment-seat to give an account of what I have preached. That which I have asked you to believe, I myself believe; and if I am lost with faith in Christ, and you are lost, well, we will both be lost, and go down in the same ship, for I have not a little private boat on the davits, ready to be let down, that I may get away by myself. I shall stick to the old ship, and be the last man to leave it; and I shall not leave it; neither will the ship go down, but it will carry us all safely to the desired haven. Well, dear friends, if you hold by this truth, do not let that ever make you gloomy. Men talk of "Gloomy Calvinism!" Have you never read about that "awful gloomy Calvinism"? Think of Calvin, a man who suffered from somewhere about eighty-three separate diseases, the most pained and tortured of all men as to his body, yet look at his life, and read his Commentaries and his other books, and see the deep and wondrous calm that filled his mighty soul. There was nothing gloomy about his Calvinism; it was all bright and light and cheering to him. They do not know us, or they would not attack us as they do; perhaps they would though, for the enemies of the truth are ever ready to lie in their throats.

Another point that we shall have to prove, dear friends, is that *the old faith promotes holiness of life.* There are some who say, "Those people cry down good works." Do we? If you bring them as a price to purchase salvation, we do cry them down. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," and, as somebody says, "The rags have the best of it, for they are worth more than our righteousnesses." We do say that; but, though we cry down good works as a ground of confidence, we wish to abound in them more and more to the glory of God. Go to some people, and hear them talk about good works; and go to other people, and see them done. We wish for you, and we wish for ourselves, that we may be so holy in our lives, so gracious in our conversation, that even our adversaries shall be compelled to say, "Whatever their doctrines may be, their lives are right." We have to prove that we are fatter and fairer than those who eat the king's meat. God help us to prove that we are more truthful and more godly than those who have not like precious faith!

The next thing, dear friends, is that we must prove that *the old faith*

produces much love of our fellow-men. You know that, nowadays, the watchword is, "the enthusiasm of humanity." It is a curious thing that those churches that have such a wonderful "enthusiasm of humanity" speak of us as if we were always talking of God and forgetting men. Well, well; which of these new-fangled churches has an orphanage? It is very fine to talk about Christian socialism, and what you are going to do for the poor; but what have you done? Much of it is just chatter, chatter, and nothing else. But the godly, who feel that God is all, are, after all, those who care most for men; and those who believe most firmly that the unbelieving sinner will be lost are the men who are most anxious to have him saved. Those who believe that there is no salvation but by the precious blood are determined that Christ shall see of the travail of his soul. Those who believe that salvation is all of grace from first to last are moved to preach it with heart and soul wherever they have the opportunity. And, when God makes up his last account, it shall be found, I trust, that the best lovers of men have been those who were first of all the best lovers of God. By your help, by your kindness, by your benevolence, prove it, so that, when they come to look at you who have eaten nothing but pulse, and who have drunk water, they may find that after all you appear fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children who ate the portion of the king's meat, and drank his wine. Let our labour for the conversion of souls be incessant. Let us abound and superabound in it.

And then, dear friends, let us prove that *the old faith enables us to have great patience in trial.* He who believes the doctrines of grace is the man who can suffer. He who falls back on predestination and the sovereignty of God is the man to bear burdens that would crush another. And when we come to die, who will die best? Will it be the man who is trusting in his own righteousness, or trusting in constantly changing philosophy, that alters like a chameleon, according to the light that falls on it? Who will die best? You, with all this flimsy stuff, or he who, believing in his God, and in his Bible, falls back upon the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ?

Finally, brethren, what is wanted is that *we who hold the old faith should be in a better state of spiritual health.* May every grace be developed! May every faculty be consecrated! May your whole lives be spent in walking with God; and may you be such men that, if we want evidences of the truth of our holy religion, we may bring you forward, and say, "See what grace has made them; a belief in the doctrines of grace has fashioned them as they are, and the men themselves are the proof of what they believe."

May God bless to many here the words which I have spoken so feebly; and may many a young man—

'Dare to be a Daniel!
Dare to stand alone!
Dare to have a purpose firm!
Dare to make it known!"

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

DANIEL I.

Verse 1. *In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.*

Sin always brings its punishment. King Jehoiakim did evil in the sight of the Lord, so God used Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to be the rod in his hand to scourge his sinful people and their wicked king.

2. *And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand,*

It was not merely that Nebuchadnezzar was strong enough to overcome the Jews; but God handed over his people into Nebuchadnezzar's hand. The enemy cannot touch the Church of God without the divine permission.

2. *With part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.*

See how holy things, once used for the noblest purposes, become of no further service when the Spirit of God is gone from the Church. You know that when the Philistines captured the ark of God, and put it in the temple of Dagon, the fish-god fell down broken before the ark. Nothing of this kind happened in Babylon. The holy vessels were put into the heathen temple, and no miraculous result followed, for God cares nothing for golden vessels in and of themselves. When sin has polluted his people, their precious things are nothing to him. They may go where men please to carry them. All their value lies in God accepting the service rendered through them. So, brother, you may keep up your attendance at the Lord's supper, and your preachings, and your gatherings for worship; but they will all be nothing without the Spirit of God. See how the Lord's supper is turned into the sacrifice of the mass, and how baptism is represented as the channel or medium of regeneration, when once the Spirit of God has gone from the divinely-appointed ordinances.

Besides these holy vessels, Nebuchadnezzar took the best of the people of the land, and carried them away captive. He singled out the rich and the noble, those who had education and other attainments, while he left the poorest of the land behind. Sometimes those who are the most exalted will have the most suffering.

3, 4. *And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children—*

Or, youths,—

4. *In whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.*

Nebuchadnezzar was, in many respects, an enlightened ruler. He looked upon this as one of the best things that he could do for his court and vast empire, that he should pick out the best of the young men of every nation, who should bring their national knowledge with them; and then, being sprightly in body and nimble in mind, should be trained to become counsellors, or advisers of the court, or be prepared to fill important offices as they became vacant.

5. *And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank:*

Treating them exceedingly well, thinking, perhaps, that the very food they ate might help to tone their minds for the work to which he had called

them. He wished to make them into true Chaldeans, so he ordained that they must eat of the meat he ate, and drink of the wine he drank.

5. *So nourishing them three years,*

Putting them to college, as it were, for three years,—

5, 6. *That at the end thereof they might stand before the king. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah:*

You know these men's names, you will recognize them when you hear them in their altered form.

7. *Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names:*

This was to Chaldeanize them, to take away from them everything Jewish.

7. *For he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.*

Now these young men's Jewish names had, each one of them, the name of God wrought into their texture. I need not stay to bring it out; but there is a signification about each name connecting it with God. You hear in two of them the sound of *El*, which is a name of God; and in the other two, the termination *Iah*, which brings out the name Jehovah. The new names that were given to them appear to have been connected with idols; at all events, it was so with Belteshazzar and Abed-nego, or Abed-nebo. The intent was to make Babylonians of them.

8. *But Daniel purposed in his heart—*

I always like to come across a "*but*" when there is any scheme of this kind on. When the plan is to seduce men from right, then it is a happy thing to have a *but, but, but,* "But Daniel purposed in his heart," determined, settled, fixed it,—

8. *That he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:*

Daniel here mentions only himself; but the three others were one with him in the resolve and the request. He was the leader. Sometimes there would be no Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, if there was not a Daniel. The other three might never have had the strength of mind, if it had not been for the Daniel, who dared to stand alone; but having such a brave leader, they dared to stand with him. We often owe much to spiritually-minded men, who are able to help others to take a right course.

8, 9. *Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.*

It was like the case of Joseph and Potiphar. Daniel's gentle disposition, his loving ways, his open and frank spirit, had won upon the prince of the eunuchs, so that he not only regarded him with favour, but even had a tender love for him. God has the hearts of all men under his control, and he may give his people favour where they least expect it.

10. *And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.*

What a reign of terror there is in a despotic country, where kings can do as they will! For the smallest offence, a man's head may be in danger.

11, 12. *Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.*

I like it that the Holy Ghost uses their old names whenever it is proper

that they should be used. May we never lose our old names! I mean, our new names, for they have grown old with some of us now. May we ever be known as the servants of God, and not as Chaldeans!

The prince of the eunuchs gave Daniel a kind of hint, that, if the officer under him chose to take the responsibility of alteri g the food and drink, he might do so, and the prince would not interfere with the experiment. So Daniel turns to Melzar, and says to him, "Prove thy servants for a suitable time. Let us have pulse to eat, and water to drink." He put his request in an extreme light, in order to be quite sure that nothing brought to him would come from the king's table.

13. *Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.*

"If we do fall off, and grow thin, and look pale and ill through this coarse food, as you think it, well then, alter it; and if, on the other hand, we should be as well as those who have eaten the king's meat, and drunk the king's wine, then let us keep to our pulse and wat r."

14. *So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.*

A round number, standing for a sufficient period to afford a fair test.

15. *And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.*

I doubt not that the satisfaction of heart which they had in keeping themselves undefiled tended to give them a good digestion, and thus they were more likely to be well than were the others.

16, 17. *Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse. As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom:*

God can help us in our study. We may pray as much over what we have to learn as over what we have to do. I believe that, often, a difficult problem can be best solved by prayer. All true knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom are the gifts of God.

17—19. *And Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.*

They were made to be his attendants, his advisers, these very men who had been so absurd as not to eat the food from the royal table, so obstinate as to consider that they would defile themselves if they did. It is these absurd and obstinate people who cannot be bent, but must be straight; the upright men, who shall stand before kings, for God is with them.

20. *And in all matters of wisdom and understanding, that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.*

They communed with God, and that was better than being magicians or star-gazers. Men of God are ten times better than all that lot put together.

21. *And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.*

Those two words summarize the whole of Daniel's history: "Daniel continued." May God give to each of us here grace to continue as Daniel did!

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

ABRAHAM, A PATTERN TO BELIEVERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 22ND, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"By faith he (Abraham) sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."—Hebrews xi. 9, 10.

ABRAHAM'S life, taken literally, is full of instruction; but we shall be wise to take the spirit of it, and endeavour to make it our own. We cannot live just as Abraham did; but we can carry out the great principles which lay at the root of Abraham's life; and, if the Holy Spirit will work in us a like degree of faith to that of the holy patriarch, we may glorify God by our lives, even as he did.

The first point in which we must follow him is that our life must be a life of faith. We cannot be children of believing Abraham unless we live by believing. If you follow your senses, you go by what you see. Now, by what this poor flesh would teach you to desire, you will know nothing of the life of Abraham. He was a man who saw what eyes can never see; he heard what ears can never hear; and he was moved, guided, actuated by motives which men of the world can never feel. He was a great man, a very prince among men; first, chief, and father of all believing men; but he owed the pre-eminence of his character to the greatness of his faith. We must have his faith, and we must live by it, as he lived by it; and then God will be able to make something of even such poor, feeble creatures as we are. Let me remind you of what we read in the sixth verse, "Without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." If we would be like "faithful Abraham", we must begin by being believers.

Abraham is in three things a pattern to us who believe; and those three things will be the divisions of our subject to-night. He is a pattern to us, first, *in the mode of his living:* "He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tents." Secondly, Abraham is a pattern to believers *in the company he kept:* "With

Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." And, thirdly, Abraham is a pattern to believers *in the home he looked for:* "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

I. First, dear friends, it should be our anxious desire to imitate Abraham spiritually IN THE MODE OF HIS LIVING. How did he live?

Well, first, he lived as a man *cut off from old associations.* He had dwelt in Ur of the Chaldees, on "the other side of the flood", as the Scripture says; and he was called to quit his family, his estate, his country, and go to a land which he had never seen, and which God promised ultimately to give to his family to be an inheritance for ever. Abraham was not disobedient. He left his country; and he journeyed to the land pointed out to him. Now, dear friends, we are not, as a rule, to leave our friends and kindred; we should be very ungenerous and ungrateful if we did. There may, however, be occasions when even that may have to be done; but we are really to leave our old associations, our unspiritual, sinful, worldly associations, and to come right out. You who are born of Christian parents, and live in godly families, do not know much about this coming out, for you are singularly shielded; but there are some here who, if they become Christians, will get "the cold shoulder" from everybody in the house. A man's foes will, in their case, be they of his own household. They will have to quit their present business. They will have to cut the connection between them and many ungodly men and women. They will have to come right out from the old kith and kin of their ungodliness, and each one of them will have to say, "I am on the Lord's side.

> "'My old companions, fare ye well,
> I cannot go with you to hell.'"

Now, Abraham did this; and he never went back again, as some do who run away from their old master for a little while, and then go back to his cruel service to their own destruction.

I suppose Abraham was called out from the place where he dwelt, to live a separated life, because his kinsfolk and acquaintances were idolaters. The Lord said to Israel, through Joshua, "Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." Abraham must, therefore, be taken away from that connection, that he might serve the living and true God. "Nay," say you, "but when he went to Palestine, he was among idolaters." Yes, but it is one thing to walk up and down among idolaters; and quite another thing to be in the same family with them. Abraham was safe enough from idolatry when he moved about among the Canaanites, and saw their obscene worship; but he was not safe from it in a decent, respectable household like that of his father, where the teraphim were slyly adored, and the worship of false gods was carried on without the disgusting abominations that were common in Canaan. I think that more people are lost through half-way Christians than through profligates. Men seldom become drunkards through drunkards; they become drunkards through ——

well, we will say no more about that, you know what I mean; and I do not think that men often learn to grow up dishonest by the example of great thieves, but it comes through imitating people who are thought to be honest, and yet can pilfer. Ah, friends, it is a good thing to get a man right out from the world, even from the best side of it; for the best part of the world is bad enough, and complete separation from it, with a deep abyss between it and ourselves, is really necessary for our spiritual health.

Now, the next thing about Abraham was that, while he lived away from his country, *he lived in the land of promise.* That was an odd thing, was it not—that he should be a stranger in the land of promise? God had given it to him and to his seed by a covenant of salt; and yet he possessed not a foot of it except what he bought of the sons of Heth for a burying-place. That is all he had. So, to-day, in this world, perhaps all that some of you will ever have is about six feet of earth for a burying-place; and yet it is all yours, it is all yours. You are living in the land of promise. "The meek shall inherit the earth." They that fear the Lord are the true possessors of the world; and the day shall come when even this poor world itself, brought into subjection to the Christ of God, shall be ours; indeed, it is ours already, and much more than the world is also ours, as the apostle says, "Things present, or things to come, all are yours." Abraham was in the land of promise, and yet he was a stranger in it.

In this point you must be like him. Regard everything about you as yours, and yet consider that you have not anything in actual possession, except that little plot in the cemetery where sleeps one well-beloved, and where you too shall sleep, unless the Lord shall come. The point to be remembered is that we are to be strangers in this world. We are not to be mistaken for citizens of this world, we ought to be known to be strangers in it. Abraham never blushed to say, even to the lordly sons of Heth, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you." He did not want them to think that he was a Canaanite. I do not know what he would have done if they had fallen into that idea. Christian people, if you were what you should be, men would know that you did not belong to this ungodly race. You have been redeemed from among men; you have been endowed with a new life to which they are strangers; and it ought to be apparent in your daily walk and conversation that you seek another country. This world is not your country, and never can be.

Why was Abraham made to be a stranger in that country? I think it was that he might be tried, and that in the trial graces might be developed which could never have come out else. And you are to be a stranger in the midst of your own friends, that your patience may be tried, that your faith may be exercised, and that your holy longings for the better country may often break out.

Was he not put there, also, that, being absent from home, he might learn to look for it by faith? You are not to be in heaven just yet. It is not the time for you to be there. You are to be absent from heaven that you may long for it, that you may go there with a better appetite. I think a boy who goes to school loves home the better when he comes back for his holidays. Oh, what a heaven

will heaven be to some of God's people who spend the most of their time on a hard bed, made harder by their lying long upon it, and who have none of the comforts of this life, and, perhaps, not too much of the comforts of the life to come! One hour with our God will make up for everything we suffer here; but our suffering will go a long way towards making heaven more truly heaven when once we get there.

Abraham was placed in Canaan as a stranger, in this sense, that he had nothing to do with many of the cares that vexed the sons of Heth. Nor have you as a Christian anything to do with the cares that vex the worldling. You ought to have no care to get rich. You are a stranger here; why do you want to heap up the furniture when you are soon going away? You ought not to know the worldings' fret and worry. They are at home, and they may well fret. That house is decaying, this furniture is going out of repair; but what is that to you? It is none of yours. You are only a traveller stopping at the inn; and if the place should fall down to-morrow, you will be away. You are on your journey home; you are not a fixture, as these men are; you take but little concern in the things that they are most worried about. If I go to Mentone, I do not trouble about French politics; I know who is the President of the Republic, but I do not know the name of the great men who sit on his right and on his left hand, and I do not want to know. If I hear anything about politics, I like to know what is being done in my own dear homeland. So, you Christians, your citizenship is in heaven. As to these things which are down below, you take an interest in them so far as they concern the kingdom of God, and the good of your fellow-men, but you are no partizan. Why should you be? You are a stranger and a foreigner; and so you keep aloof from party strifes, and from those cares and other things of which the men of the world think so much.

I think, also, that Abraham was sent to Canaan as a stranger, to be a witness for God. These people were soon to be destroyed, but their iniquity was not yet full; so they had another chance in the living of a man of God, a prophet of God, among them. You, my Christian friend, are a stranger here, and you are living here for the good of those around you. It may be that you may snatch some brand from the burning. Be content to stay if such is the case.

Abraham lived there to show the people what God could do for those who trusted in him. He was a mere gipsy in the land, moving about with his tent; and yet he came to be the richest man among them. Abraham was very greatly blessed in flocks and in herds, for God took care of him; and I think he did it to say to these Canaanites, "You see, with all your fret, and all your worry, God's servant Abraham gets on better than you do." So, when the king of Sodom offers Abraham wealth, he grandly says, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abraham rich." Yet the man was prospered; and by his prosperity he taught men this lesson, that he who trusts in God is no fool. He who trusts in God shall find, even in this life, as far as he is able to bear it, and God thinks fit, that the Lord "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Still, Abraham was, to all intents and purposes, a foreigner in the

land that belonged to him, even as you are strangers in a world that belongs to you; and as your Lord came unto his own, and his own received him not; and as God himself is a stranger in the world he made, even as David said to the Lord, "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."

To make this point still more clear as to Abraham's mode of living, I want you to notice that *Abraham lived in tents.* He never erected a house; he built no booths; he simply had his tent, and he pitched it, or shifted it as he moved from place to place. Why was this? What did it mean? Not that you should go in a tent, but that you should feel that everything you have, all round about you, all your possessions, are but frail things, and are apt to change. I know that you begin to look upon that little property as a very sure thing; be not deceived, the only sure thing is your God. You are beginning to look upon your worldly income as pretty certain, and you rest upon it. The only thing you may rest upon is the faithful promise of your God. So you think your wife will live? Ah, me! I do not wish to grieve you; if I could prophesy, I would not tell you how soon she may be taken. You look upon your children as young immortals; but they are not. You will have to bury them, or they will have to bury you. All things here pass away. I cannot tell you the strange joy I felt after the earthquake at Mentone. I had been to see many of the houses that had been shaken down, and the two churches that were greatly injured, and I was full of the earthquake. I had quite realized its terrors and its power; and when I went up the stairs of my hotel, I thought, "Well, at any moment this may all come down with a run. When I go to bed, it may all slip away;" and I felt a great delight in thinking that I actually realized, not in a dream, but as a matter of fact, the shakiness of this poor earthquaky world, and how everything in it is without foundation, but is just a mere tent which might come down at any moment; a gust of wind might blow it over. When we are most comfortable in it, we may hear a voice saying, "Up and away: pack up your tent, and journey somewhere else." Sit loose by this world, I pray you. Let not your roots strike into this accursed soil. Live here as those who are soon to live there; and tarry here as men who only tarry till the trumpet sounds, "Boot and saddle; up and away, for this is not your rest." When we live so, we shall live as Abraham did, and as God would have us live.

II. Now, very briefly, in the next place, we must imitate Abraham IN THE COMPANY HE KEPT: "Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise."

What a fortunate, nay, what a gracious circumstance it was that Abraham could find the best company in his own neighbourhood! There are some men I know that are fine company out of doors, wonderful company, I have heard say, in the bar-parlour, or at a banquet; but they are no company to anybody at home. Short, gruff, sharp barks like a wolf; this is all their family can get out of them. When they are once inside the house, they are not at home. When they are outside, and far away, then they are quite at home.

But here is Abraham, who lives in a tent, and has the happiness

of *finding his best company in his own family.* I suppose that he lived with Isaac about seventy-five years. If you calculate, you will find that that is about the time. Did he live with Jacob? Yes, he must have lived at the same time as Jacob for about fifteen years. He saw his dear son Isaac married, and twin children born, and he marked their life long enough to see that Jacob was of that kind that would make a plain man dwelling in tents; and Abraham found the sweetest company with his own dear family. May the Lord in mercy convert all our children, and their wives, and their children; and may we have a church in a house, as Abraham had a church in a tent! Happy men who can find their best company at home!

But that is not the point I want to mention. *Abraham dwelt in tents with those like-minded with himself.* We know a man by his company; and a man is blessed or cursed by his company. Abraham dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob; men of the same spirit as himself, quite different men, but men saved by the same grace, men who worshipped the same God, men who lived for the same end, men who were actuated by the same principles, men who were co-heirs with him of the promised land. This is the company I keep; these are the dearest friends I know. If you want a merry evening, child of God, get together half-a-dozen who are, like yourself, God's children; if you want an evening that you can look back upon with delight, gather such a company together. Never mind how poor the believers are; perhaps the poorer they are the better it will be, for they will talk more freely with God, often, than some of what we call the better class; the worse class, I have often had to call them. Children of God, who really have to look to him for daily bread, are often more full of faith than any other class of society. People of God who know the rough and tumble of the world, those who have stood its hard usage, those who mix from day to day with ungodly men who scoff at them, these are the men who come to God in real earnest. They do not play at religion; they live it. Never mind their station or rank in life. If they are in good favour with God, let them be in good favour with you; and make you your choicest companions among the people of God. I have seen some, who call themselves children of God, turn up their noses at God's best people because they did not put their H's in the right places, or they spoiled the Queen's English. Bless the dear souls! If their hearts are right with God, what matters it about the faultiness of their talk? Ah, how often have our souls been carried up to heaven by prayers that violated all the proprieties! And how often have I been made to feel as dull as death by a prayer that was wonderfully beautiful in its wording; cold moonlight, no sunshine; a pretty picture, but no life in it! Give us the life of God, and let us get into our tent with Isaac and with Jacob, and there let us find Isaac's God, and Jacob's God, and we shall do well.

Dear young friends, who have lately come to Christ, mind that you keep company with God's people. I do not want you to have a lot of acquaintances to talk to; but do have one or two; perhaps two may be better than one, but one is good enough, one godly Christian to whom you can go and tell your troubles, one older than yourself who has been a little farther on the road than you have been. Talk with

such saints, as Jacob probably talked with father Isaac, and Isaac with father Abraham, while they lived together in the same encampment, and dwelt in tents.

III. Now, lastly, I wish to say something that may lead your hearts away from this poor, dead, dull world; let us imitate Abraham IN THE HOME HE LOOKED FOR: "for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Note, first, that *all saints live with an eye beyond time.* You know, the horse and the cow are quite satisfied as long as there is something in the rack or the manger; they make no provision for future months. Young men, when they begin life, often spend in waste all they get, and make no provision for old age. We do not commend you for your wisdom if you have done so; but we beg you not only to think of all that may be needed while you are here, but to think also of the hereafter. Can we live through this transient span of time, and never remember that we have to live for ever? Can we spend all our time upon time, and have no view to eternity? FOOLS, FOOLS, FOOLS, writ in capital letters, are they who can use this life, and never regard it as the hinge upon which must swing the great door of their eternal state. Children of God have an eye to the world to come. They do not live "like dumb, driven cattle"; but they think of the changeless state into which death, or Christ's coming, may speedily plunge them, and they live with an eye to that state.

Saints have good reason to live thus. They have not much here, as a rule. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."

> "Alas, for us, if thou wert all,
> And nought beyond, O earth!"

Alas, for the believer in God, if all he had could be had here! Surely, we are to be greatly pitied as having missed the grandest end, if this world contains our all. But it does not contain our all; Christians have a hope beyond the grave. What an awful thing it must be to every one here who must die, but who has no idea yet of what will become of him; or, if down deep in his conscience there is an idea of what it will be, it is "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation"! How can you go home happy? How many die in the streets! How many die in their sleep! I pray you, be not so unconcerned as to be upon the brink of eternal ruin, and yet never to think of it. God give you to look beyond the grave, and make sure work for eternity!

We are told here that *Abraham expected a city.* That is an inspired description of heaven. On earth Abraham had no city; Lot went away to Sodom to seek a city, that city was burned with fire and brimstone, and Lot barely escaped with his life. Abraham kept to his tents; he knew nothing about city life, but "he looked for a city."

Why is heaven called a city? Because it is a place of fellowship where men meet one another. You know, away in the country, there is sometimes a lonely cottage where they only see a man pass once in six weeks. They never see even the postman; they must go to get their letters. Heaven is not like such lonely places; we look upon

heaven, not as a spot where there will be half-a-dozen people of our own views and sentiments, but as a great city where there will be a wide fellowship among a multitude that no man can number.

It will be a city for security, within walls that never can be attacked, and with streets where there shall never be known an adversary. Heaven is a city because it is a place of splendour. Countries glorify themselves by the greatness of their cities. There is no city like to the New Jerusalem.

It is a place of store. Cities have great wealth, and great accumulations of useful things, which are not found in villages and hamlets. In heaven there is everything that heart can desire, fruits new and old laid up by the great Lord for his well-beloved.

Heaven is a place of freedom, and therefore it is called a city. Men get "the freedom of the city" here; and they are as proud of it as they well can be. But, oh, to be liverymen of glory, freemen of the company of the perfect, citizens of the New Jerusalem! This is what we look for. We are looking for a city. We think all this so-called city of London to be but a dissolving view. We count this great country of England to be but like a pack of cards which will soon be knocked over. We reckon the whole world to be but a dream. There is a city, and we are looking for it.

The text said that Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations." *Saints look for something abiding.* Abraham used to pull up the tent-pins, and his men would take down the big tent-pole, and roll up the canvas, and they were soon away, always moving about that country with their flocks and herds. The tents had no foundations; but Abraham was looking for a city that had foundations. There is nothing on earth that really has a foundation. Even those buildings that seem most firm will be dissolved, and burned up in the last general fire. They are all "such stuff as dreams are made of", and will be gone before long; but we look for a city that hath foundations. Eternal love, eternal faithfulness, infinite power, endless bliss, immortal glory, make the foundations of the city to which we are now wending our way, where all is peace and joy, and nothing can ever disturb it. When I think of some of our dear friends who are already there, who have gone from this city to *the* city that hath foundations, could I wish them back again? Could you wish them back to all the sorrow and grief of this poor trying life, back to the tent which has been dissolved, now that they have gained "the building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"? Nay, beloved, stay where you are! We are hoping soon to join you. We can hear the sound of the coming chariot, and we shall soon be with you where Jesus is!

This was Abraham's way of living, counting everything around him to be no more fixed and settled than an Arab's tent, and looking for a city which hath foundations.

That city was to have a Builder and a Maker, as all cities have. Hundreds and thousands of names would have to be mentioned to describe this city of London, and to say who the builders and makers of it were. You need not be anxious to know them, for they are not good for much, most of them. The builders and makers

of the streets that we go through had better be forgotten; and, I think, their houses, too. But there is a city that is all built by one Builder, it is the city of God. There will be nothing there that is trumpery or temporary; everything there is the best of the best, most suitable for the inhabitants, and most glorious to behold. The very streets are paved with gold, exceeding rich and rare. The best builders of earth cannot be compared to the great Builder above, the eternal Architect, the everlasting Freemason who has built those many mansions where his saints shall dwell for ever.

I cannot tell you anything about heaven. If I could come back for a while after going there, I would like to come and tell you; but that must not be. You must read this Book, and study it. Above all, you must get heaven into your own heart, for you will never have your heart in heaven till you have heaven in your heart. You must have heaven in you before you will be in heaven; and you can learn about heaven by the experimental knowledge of the Word of God, by living near to the Lord, and by an experience of his deep love and his eternal faithfulness. Thus, there is a city, which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

Are you going there? Why, there are some of you who have here everything that you own. You are like the man, when the ship was sinking, who had all his property round his waist in pieces of gold, which sank him to the bottom of the sea. Everything that you have is here, and it is sinking you down to perdition. As for us who have believed in Christ, we have only a trifle of spending money just to pay the toll-gates on the road; but our treasury is up there, on the other side of the river, in the land of the hereafter, on the hill-tops of glory, with the ever-blessed, where we hope soon to be.

Saints look for their home at the end of their pilgrimage. When a man goes a long journey, he likes to have thoughts of his home. How often have I told you how quickly my horses go home! They seem to know when their heads are turned homewards, and away they go. They pull up even the highest of Norwood's hills with all their might because they are going home. They do not go so fast when they are coming here, and I do not blame them. They know where there is a good feed for them, and a place to lie down in; and even a horse goes best with his head towards home. Come, beloved, our heads are towards home, as many of us as believe in Jesus! We do not want to be lashed as we go up the everlasting hills. We will pull against the collar with all our might to get home as soon as we can.

Oh, but I wish you were all going with us! I wish you were all going the way that leads to the city that hath foundations. Trust Christ; trust Christ; he is the Way. Come out from the world; lead the separated life; live upon an unseen God; and as surely as there is a God in heaven, you shall be in heaven in his good time; for he will never leave one believer outside in the cold. God bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HEBREWS XI. 1—21.

This is the triumphal arch of faith. Here we find the names of many of the heroes of faith, and a brief record of some of the battles in which they fought and conquered. May you and I possess "like precious faith" as that of which we have here the story! We cannot enter heaven without it; we cannot fight our way through the world without it.

Verse 1. *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,*

It gets a grip of what it hopes for, and holds it in its hand.

1. *The evidence of things not seen.*

We do see by faith. We see by faith what cannot be seen by our eyes; we grasp by faith what cannot be grasped with our hands. A strange mystery is the simple act of faith.

2. *For by it the elders obtained a good report.*

All the godly of the olden time had a good report of God and of holy men as the result of their faith.

3. *Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

They were not evolved out of something else that existed before; evolution is a rank lie against revelation. The worlds were not made, not one of them was made, out of something pre-existent; but they were framed by the Word of God, and the things which are seen were not made of things which are seen.

4. *By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain,*

He was a better man than Cain, and his offering was a better offering than Cain's was; but at bottom here was the difference between the two brothers, Abel had faith, and Cain had none. It was "by faith" that "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain" presented.

4. *By which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.*

What wondrous faith this is! Here is a dead man speaking. Here is a man who is slain by his brother; yet the one who is killed receives the approbation of God.

5. *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death;*

Faith has conquered death itself, or else avoided it. There is scarcely anything which faith cannot do, for faith ranks itself on the side of the omnipotent God, and becomes all but omnipotent. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death."

5, 6. *And was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,*

He cannot come to a God who to his own mind is non-existent; he must believe that he is.

6. *And that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

You must believe that God hears prayer. You must believe that he will punish the guilty, and that he will reward the righteous. Without this sure faith, you cannot come to him.

7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house;*

You see, faith and fear can live in the same heart; and they can work together to build the same ark. Faith and fear are very sweet companions,

when the fear is filial fear, a holy dread of disobeying God. When we are moved with that fear, our faith becomes practical.

7, 8. *By the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed;*

He did not hesitate to leave his family, to leave his property, to leave his country; but he obeyed, "when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance."

8. *And he went out, not knowing whither he went.*

Faith puts her hand into God's hand, and follows where he leads, with sweet contentment, knowing that, if she cannot see, God can, and he will not lead us wrong. Do you not remember that hymn that our Brother Chamberlain sings so sweetly?

"So on I go—not knowing, I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God, than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with him, than go alone by sight.
Where he may lead, I'll follow, My trust in him repose:
And every hour in perfect peace I'll sing, 'He knows! he knows!'"

9, 10. *By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

There have been many here in this house of prayer who have looked for this city, and they have gone to it. Others of us sit waiting here till our Lord's dear hand shall beckon us, and his voice shall say, "Come up higher." We are looking for the city. Keep looking, beloved, there is nothing here worth looking for; but look for "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God."

11. *Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.*

And this holy woman is enrolled among these saintly ones. Her faith was not all it ought to have been; but God saw that it was true faith, and he loved it, and he wrote the record of it.

12. *Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.*

This is true, literally, of Abraham's seed according to the flesh. It is also true in a spiritual sense, for he is "the father of all them that believe", and they are a multitude whom no man can number.

13. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them,*

What long arms faith has! The promises are afar off, and yet faith embraces them to-night. Embrace the promises, dear friends, and stretch out your hands by faith to hands that have gone before.

"E'en now by faith we join our hands
With those that went before;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
On the eternal shore."

13. *And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

They not only were strangers and pilgrims, but they confessed it. Confessed faith is requisite. Oh, you who, like Nicodemus, come to Christ

by night, be ashamed that you are ashamed, and come out, and boldly confess what you are!

14. *For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.*

They were strangers and pilgrims here, and they sought a country elsewhere. Every man wants a country; and if we have not one beneath the stars, we seek it somewhere else.

15. *And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.*

Ah, but God's people are not mindful of that country from whence they came out! They have opportunity to return; but they have no wish to return. May God's grace always keep any of you from turning back; for it is to turn back unto perdition! Your faces are heavenward to-day; keep them so. Remember the doom of any that apostatize. It is impossible, "if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." "If the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." Lord, keep thy servants! Hold us up, and we shall be safe.

16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*

They are not ashamed to be called God's people, and he is not ashamed to be called their God. They are looking for a city, and he has prepared a city for them. Evidently he and they are well agreed. They want a heaven, and he is preparing heaven for them, and preparing them for heaven.

17—19. *By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.*

This was one of the grandest achievements of faith. It was also a figure or type of God's offering up his well-beloved Son almost on the same spot.

20, 21. *By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.*

The staff which had helped him so often in his early pilgrimage, the staff on which he leaned when he came back from the place of his wrestling, halting on his thigh. He leaned on it as he sat upright on his death-couch, and pronounced the parting blessing. So, you see, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, all lived by faith, and did their works by faith, and distributed blessings to their children by faith. Friend, hast thou this faith, or hast thou not? If thou hast it, thou art blessed among men, blessed among women. If thou hast it not, what hope is there for thee either in this life or in eternity?

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—658, 866, 875.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SIMEON'S SWAN SONG.*

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JANUARY 29TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."—Luke ii. 29, 30.

IF we are believers in Christ, we shall one day use words like these. Perhaps not just at present; and yet, possibly, sooner than some of us think, we shall gather up our feet in our bed, and we shall say with all composure, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

See what death is to the believer. It is only a departure. It is a departure after a day of service. "Lord, now lettest thou *thy servant depart*. My day's work is done; let me now go home." With us who believe it will be a departure to a higher service, for we shall still be the Lord's servants even when we depart from this present sphere of labour. We shall go to do yet higher and more perfect work in the nearer presence of our Master. "His servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face." But death to the believer is only a departure from one form of service to another.

And, note, that it is a departing "*in peace*." We are at peace with God. We have—

> "Peace! perfect peace! in this dark world of sin,
> The blood of Jesus whispers peace within!"

As many as have believed in Jesus, have entered into rest. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;" we have joy and peace

* Published in ever-loving memory of the beloved servant of the Lord, C. H. SPURGEON, who departed in peace, January 31st, 1892. Is not the first anniversary of the dear preacher's promotion to glory a good time to seek to increase the circulation of his sermons? Mrs. Spurgeon continues to receive the most cheering assurances of the usefulness of the discourses and expositions of her glorified husband; and by them "he, being dead, yet speaketh." Who will help him to address an ever-increasing congregation by means of the printed page? A packet of prospectuses will be sent, post free, on application to Messrs. Passmore & Alabaster, Paternoster Buildings, London.

in believing; and, as we live in peace, we shall also die in peace. We shall remain in peace, and we shall depart in peace. A deep and holy calm will fill up our dying moments.

> "It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
> And Jesus call to heaven's perfect peace!"

We shall be able to say, perhaps, when we come to die, what a dear friend of mine once said to me, when I went in to see him on his dying bed. A part of his affliction consisted in total blindness from what they call the breaking of the eye-strings. Sitting up, although he could not see me, he moved his hand, and said,—

> "And when ye see my eye-strings break,
> How sweet my minutes roll!
> A mortal paleness on my cheek,
> But glory in my soul!"

So will it be with us; we shall depart in peace. To the believer, death is not a thing to be dreaded; he even asks for it, "Lord, now *lettest* thou, permittest thou, thy servant to depart in peace. Grant it as a boon, vouchsafe it as a favour." Death to the sinner is a curse, but to the believer it is a form of benediction, it is the gate of life. To the sinner, it is a chain dragging him down to the unutterable darkness of the pit; but to the saint, it is a chariot of fire bearing him aloft to the heaven of light and love.

Note, also, that Simeon said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, *according to thy word*." Did you not notice, in our reading, what Luke says about Simeon in the twenty-sixth verse? "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." The prophecy had been fulfilled, he had seen the Lord's Anointed; there was nothing more for him to desire upon earth, so he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: *for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*." The reason for Simeon's holy calm, the cause of his finding death to be nothing but a departure out of this world, lies in this fact, that he could say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It is of that blessed fact that I am going to talk to-night as the Spirit shall help me.

I do not suppose that everybody here can say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace." Some of you would not depart in peace if death came to you as you now are. Dear friend, if you are not prepared for death and judgment, you had better pray, "Lord, let me stop here till I have found peace with thee; and then let me depart in peace whensoever thou wilt."

I shall at this time take the innermost sense of the text, dwelling upon these words of Simeon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." There were others who had seen the baby Christ with their natural eyes; but Simeon had seen, in the babe, Christ the salvation of God, not with his outward eyes, but with the inward perceptions of his spirit. I hope that many here present can say that they have seen, and do see, in Christ, God's salvation, and their salvation given to them of God. If so, I am sure that they feel ready to live, or ready

to die; but if it be not so with any of you, if you cannot say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," you cannot pray, "Lord, let thy servant depart in peace."

What, then, do these words mean, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation"? I will try to explain their meaning in my discourse to-night; and when I have finished, I think you will see that there are these five things included in this utterance of old Simeon; first, here is *clear perception;* next, *perfect satisfaction;* then, *happy unbinding;* then, *dauntless courage;* and finally, *joyful appropriation.*

I. The first thing for us to notice in Simeon's swan song is CLEAR PERCEPTION: "Mine eyes *have seen* thy salvation."

Some people are very hazy in their religion; they "see men as trees walking." They see things as we see them in London in a fog; that is to say, we do not see them clearly; we cannot see them distinctly; and yet we do see them after a fashion. The fault with a great many Christians, nowadays, is that they have only just light enough to see things as in a mist; they have not discerned clearly the sharply-cut image of the truth. But Simeon could say, not, "I think I see the salvation of God in Christ; I hope I do; perhaps I do; but he could say, "Mine eyes *have seen* thy salvation." Oh, happy are you, my dear friends, to-night, if you can distinctly and clearly see in Christ Jesus, the salvation of God!

True, Christ was but a baby then; and Simeon could easily hold him in his arms; yet his faith could see everlasting salvation, *infinite salvation within God incarnate.* God has come into our world, and has taken upon himself our nature. He that was born at Bethlehem was "very God of very God." He that trod the acres of Palestine, as he went about doing good, was the same who "was in the beginning with God," without whom was not anything made that was made. Christ is God. "The Word was with God, and the Word was God;" but it is equally true that "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

"It is my sweetest comfort, Lord,
And will for ever be,
To muse upon the gracious truth
Of thy humanity.

For ever God, for ever man,
My Jesus shall endure;
And fix'd on him, my hope remains
Eternally secure."

Now, this Christ took upon himself the sins of all his people. "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" and sin being laid on Christ, it remained no more on those from whom he took it. He bore it that they might not bear it; he suffered the consequences of their sin that they might never suffer those consequences. Jesus made an atonement to the justice of God; he vindicated and honoured the perfect law of the Most High. When I see Christ on the cross, Christ in the tomb, Christ risen from the dead, Christ at the right hand of God, I

understand that he took away my sin. He died; he was buried; he came forth from the grave, having destroyed my sin, and put it away; and he has gone into the heavens as my Representative, to take possession of the right hand of God for me, that I in him and with him may sit there for ever and ever. To me, Christ's sacrifice is a business transaction as clear and straight as mathematics could make it. I care not that men decry what they call "the mercantile theory of the atonement." I hold no "theory" of the atonement; I believe that the substitution of Christ for his people is the atonement for their sins; and that there is no other atonement, but that all else is theory. This is to me so clear, so true, so definite, that I can venture to say with Simeon, when I have seen Christ, especially Christ crucified, Christ glorified, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Clear perception, then, is the first meaning of Simeon's words.

You young people, who have come to believe in Christ, *get clear perceptions as to how Christ is God's salvation.* Do not mix and muddle things up as so many do; but accept Christ as your Substitute, as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Believe that on the cross he paid your debt, discharged your liability, and bought you with a price, so that you are his, and his for ever and ever. You will never have peace in death, I do not see how you are to have solid rest in life, without a sharp, crisp, clearly-cut idea of how Christ is the salvation of God. The bulk of people do not see it, and they therefore miss the comfort of it. The comfort of a man, immersed in debt, is assured if he has a friend who bears his burden, and pays his debt for him; then he feels that he is clear of all his former liabilities. I declare, before the living God, that I know of no solid comfort for my heart to-night but this, the chastisement of my peace was upon him, and with his stripes I am healed. May you get a clear perception of this great truth now!

II. But, next, when Simeon could say, "Mine eyes have seen *thy salvation*," he had PERFECT SATISFACTION in Christ.

You observe, he takes Christ up in his arms, and says, "Mine eyes have seen," not, "a part of thy salvation," but "*thy salvation.*" He is not looking to anything else for salvation, but only to that Man-child, seeing all that that Man-child will do, and bear, and suffer, recognizing in him the two natures, the divine and the human; and as he clasps him to his breast, he says, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation. It is enough, I have here all that I want. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Beloved friends, have you ever done with Christ what old Simeon did? "He took him up in his arms, and blessed God." All that you need to save you, lies in him. I have known the Lord now for some forty years, or thereabouts. When I first came to him, I came as a sinner, without any works of my own which I could trust, or any experience upon which I could rely; and I just rested my whole weight upon the finished work of Christ. Now, after forty years of service, and nearly forty years of preaching the gospel, have I any works of my own to add to what Christ has done? I abhor the thought of such a thing. Have I even the weight of a pin's head

that I dare put into the scale with my Lord's merits? Accursed be the idea! More than ever do I sing,—

"Nothing save Jesus would I know,"

and nowhere would I rest but in him alone. Now, dear Christian friends, I know you understand this, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour, that he is all your salvation, and all your desire; and yet, perhaps, you are tempted at times to think that you must be this, or you must do that, or you must feel the other, or else Christ is of none effect to you. Think not so; but rest wholly and alone on Christ. Say, "I rest in him, whether I am a saint or a sinner; whether I have bright frames or dark frames; whether I am useful, or whether I am defeated in my service. I have no more to trust in when I rejoice in the light of God's countenance than I have when I walk in darkness, and see no light. Christ is everything to me at all times; a winter Christ and a summer Christ; all my light when I have no other, and all my light when I have every other light."

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly lean on Jesus' name:
On Christ the solid rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

God bring you to this, that you may just say, "I have seen Christ, mine eyes have seen God's salvation, I am perfectly satisfied; I want nothing else." Does a man pluck me by the sleeve, and say, "I will tell you something worth hearing"? My good fellow, go and tell it to somebody who wants to hear it; for I do not. I have heard all the news I want when I have heard of eternal salvation by Jesus Christ.

III. Now, thirdly, notice that there is in Simeon's words, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," a kind of HAPPY UNBINDING. The man has been, as it were, bound; but he says, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant *depart in peace*. Every fetter is broken now. I have seen thy salvation, Lord, I am not tied to life, nor tied to home, nor tied to comfort, nor tied even to thy temple. Now, Lord, I can go anywhere, departing in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

Is not that a grand utterance of old Simeon? The most of us are tied in one way or another, and we find it hard to cut ourselves loose. With many of us, the first part of our life is often spent in tying ourselves down to this world; and by-and-by we feel that we are too much tied, bound, hampered, hindered; and we cry out, "How shall we get free?" The only way to get free is to get Christ. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." If you take Christ in your arms, and say with Simeon, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," you can then say, "Everyone else and everything else may go now.

"'Yea, shouldst thou take them all away,
Yet will I not repine;
Before they were possessed by me,
They were entirely thine.'"

And, as thou hast given me Christ, thou mayest do what thou wilt with me as to other things." Where Christ is not valued, gold becomes an idol. Where Christ is not prized, health becomes an idol. Where Christ is not loved, learning and fame become idols. Where Christ is not first and foremost, even personal beauty may become an idol. But when Christ becomes our all in all, because our eyes have seen his salvation, then the idols fall, Dagon is broken; we are emancipated; and we can say concerning all these things, "Ay, whether ye come or whether ye go, ye are not lords of the house; you are but comers and goers unto me henceforth and for ever; for a clear conception that Christ is God's salvation, and a full grasp of him as mine, have set my spirit free from every fetter that hitherto held me in captivity."

IV. I must not pause here, because I want you to notice how the being able to say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," gives to a man DAUNTLESS COURAGE.

He who has once seen Christ as God's salvation is not afraid to see death. "Now," saith he, "I can look death in the face without dread, for I have seen God's salvation." He is not afraid of that tremendous judgment-seat which will be set in the clouds of heaven, for he who will sit upon that judgment-seat is God's salvation to us who believe. The man who is "looking unto Jesus" is not afraid of the day when the earth will rock and reel, and everything based upon it will shake to its destruction. He is not afraid of the star called Wormwood, nor of seeing heaven and earth on a blaze. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation," saith he; and he bears this glorious vision about with him wherever he goes; it is more to him than any earthly talisman could be, it is more powerful than the most potent charm of the mystic or the magician. Such a man is safe; he must be safe; his eyes have seen God's salvation.

If you would have a courage of the truest kind, that needs no stimulus of drink, and no excitement of the noise of trumpet and of drum, the calm courage that can suffer pain, that can bear rebuke, that can endure slander, that can stand alone, that could stand foot to foot with the infernal fiend himself, and yet not be afraid—if you would have such courage as that, you must get Christ in your arms; for then shall you say with Simeon, "Lord, come what may, I have nothing to fear, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

> "Fearless of hell and ghastly death,
> I'd break through every foe;
> The wings of love, and arms of faith,
> Should bear me conqueror through."

V. I will not detain you much longer, for the time is well nigh spent; but I would say this one more thing, he who layeth hold on Christ, makes a JOYFUL APPROPRIATION of him. His sight of Christ, his clear apprehension of what Christ is, is accompanied by a personal appropriation of Christ to himself.

This is the matter that puzzles many. I have, during the past week, talked with several people who have heard from me concerning the way of salvation, and the preciousness of Christ, and the question

of many of these enquirers has been this, "How can we get a hold of Christ? We believe that all you say about him is true. Christ is God's salvation; but how can we take him to be ours? You seem to treat Christ as if he were yours beyond all question. How can we learn to do the same?" My answer is, when you once know how the Saviour saves, and how he is God's salvation, trust him to save you. That trust grips him, holds him; and if you can hold him, he is yours. We have certain rights of property extant among us, and a man may have to bring his title-deeds to prove that a house is really his own; but in the kingdom of grace, the only title-deed you want is that you have a hold of Christ. May I take him, then, without any right? Yes, taking Christ gives you the right to take him. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." There is a piece of bread on yonder table; I mean to have it for my own. It will be of no use for you to dispute with me about the matter, for I shall put it beyond all dispute. How? I shall take that bread in my hand. Well, you can wrench it from me. I shall do more than that; I shall eat it; I shall digest it; it will become a part of my own being. You will not get it away from me then; and I do not care if you go to law with me to try to get it. Possession is more than nine points of the law in such a case as that. Digestion and assimilation will be ten points of the law, certainly. Now, it is just so with Christ. Poor soul, take him; believe him; trust him; appropriate him. Trust him more, and more, and more. The more the devil tries to take him from thee, trust him the more. Plunge thyself deeper and deeper still into this sea of salvation, and trust Christ still more.

Perhaps some one says, "But how may I know at first that I have a right to trust Christ? You have a right to trust Christ because you are commanded to do it. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Make a dash for this great blessing. Take Christ to-night, whether or no; for, though it should seem like robbery to thee to take him, yet if thou once hast him, he will never be taken away from thee. Make a dash for Christ, I say, to-night, and take him, saying, "I believe him; I trust him; I rest myself on him." Heaven and earth shall pass away; but if thou dost trust Christ, thou shalt never be ashamed. There was never a man yet who dared trust Christ, and yet found that Christ was not equal to his need, or that he did not fully supply all his wants.

Simeon took Christ up in his arms. Somebody might have said, "Old man, what hast thou to do with the new-born King? Old man, thou mayest be just and devout; but darest thou handle the Incarnate God? Darest thou fondle him upon whose shoulders God hath laid the key of his kingdom, whose name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace? Darest thou touch him?" Yes, he dares do it; he takes him up in his arms, he clasps him to his heart, he rejoices over him, he is ready to die with delight now that he has found Christ. Come, poor troubled ones, come to-night, and take Christ into your arms! And you, dear saints of God, who have done this long ago,

do it over again! Take him right up into your arms, as though he were still a babe. Take him still to your heart, and say, "He is everything to me—my love, my hope, my brother, this blessed Incarnate God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." If thou canst do this, it shall be well with thee now, it shall be well with thee in death, it shall be well with thee throughout eternity.

Have I among my hearers any who are postponing this all-important business, putting it off till a more convenient season? Let me tell them something that ought to warn them of the risk they are running. Once upon a time, the prince of darkness said to the evil spirits under his command, "I want to see which of you can be my best servant. The gospel is being preached in various places, and many persons are hearing it, and I am afraid that my kingdom will suffer loss. Unless something can be done, I fear that many will desert from under the black flag, and enlist under the standard of Jesus of Nazareth. I would fain prevent this; which of you will help me?" Then up rose one, who said, "I will go forth, and say that the Bible is not true, that Christ is not God, and that what is preached is not the truth." But the great prince of the pit answered him, "Thou wilt not serve my turn just now. There are a few places where thou wilt be very useful; but the most of those who are listening to this Word will scout thee, and drive thee back. Thou smellest too much of the place whence thou goest on my errands. Thou canst not do what I want now." Up stood another of the evil throng, and said, "Let me go, and I will bring forth certain new views of truth, and various fresh doctrines, and with these I will turn aside the thoughts of men from the old faith." But the prince of the power of the air replied, "Thou, too, art a good servant of mine, and thou standest me in good stead at other times; but just now thou art not the one for the task I propose." Then out spake one, who said, "O prince of darkness, methinks I am thy good soldier on this occasion. Here am I, send me." "And what wilt thou do?" said Beelzebub, "What will thou do?" "I will go forth, and tell the people that the warnings of the preacher are true, and the voice of the gospel is the voice of God; I will not awaken and arouse them by any sort of opposition; but I will tell them that there is time enough, by-and-by, to attend to these things. I will bid them wait a little longer, and bide their time. I will put this word into the mouth of each one, that he may say to the preacher, 'Go thy way, for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.'" Then the grim master of the pit smiled, and said, "Go thy way, my faithful servant, thou art he that shall carry out my purpose right thoroughly, and so shalt thou foil the preacher, and the word that he utters shall fall to the ground." Is there not a message here for some one who is listening to my words?

"Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." How I wish that I could make some here, who do not know it, understand how divinely simple is the way of salvation! You are a sinner, guilty and condemned. Christ becomes a man, takes your sins, suffers in your stead. You accept him to stand for you. You permit him, by your faith, to be accepted as your Substitute, and his pains are put down instead of

yours, and you are "accepted in the Beloved," and saved in him. Oh, if you could but do this,—and you may do it to-night before you leave this place, and I hope you will,—if you do this, whether you be old or young, there will come to you a heartful of benediction for life, and the best of all preparations for death. Truly happy shall you be if you can say, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

I seem as if I did not want to see anything else, after having seen Christ as God's salvation. There is a story told of Mahometans, who often are very fanatical, and do very strange and horrible things in their fanaticism; but they have been known to go to Mecca, to see the tomb of their prophet, and when they have seen his tomb, they have taken a hot steel, and have drawn it across their eyes, that they might never see anything else, that indeed they might die with the view of the false prophet's tomb as their last sight. Now, that is not what we do; but still we would act in the spirit of it. "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." People say, "See Naples, and die." They mean that it is so lovely that, when you have seen it, there is nothing more to see. See Christ, and what else is there to see? Now, whether you sail over the blue sea beneath a bluer sky, or dive into the deeps of this murky atmosphere, whether you are in a palace or in a dungeon, sick or full of bounding health, all these are items of small consequence. If your eyes have seen God's salvation, God has blessed you as only God can bless you. Go and live in peace, and go and die in peace; and praise the name of him who gave you such a Saviour to see, and the power to see him. The Lord bless you, beloved! Amen and amen.

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Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE II. 21—38.

Verse 21. *And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

Although the old law ends with Christ, it is very instructive to notice that he came under the law, and conformed to all its appointments. Jesus, therefore, had to be circumcised. In him the law was fulfilled in every point, even to the jots and tittles; nothing was omitted. Behold, how perfect is the righteousness which he wrought out for his people!

22. *And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;*

Everything was done that was required by the Jewish law, you see. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "Being found in fashion as a man," and a man under the Jewish law, Jesus and his parents were obedient to all its requirements.

23, 24. (*As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;*) *and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*

This proves the poverty of our Lord's parents. If they had been able to bring a costlier sacrifice, they should have done so. The law required the offering of a lamb for a burnt offering; but there was a gracious provision in the case of the poor mother: "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean." Even in the case of a working-woman, the birth of her first-born son required from her a sacrifice; but it might be of the smallest kind: "A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons." Think of your Lord himself redeemed by a sacrifice, a pair of doves offered in his stead! What a wonderful coming down to our condition and position was this!

25. *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout,*

He blended in his character his duty to man and his duty to God, he was "just and devout."

25. *Waiting for the consolation of Israel:*

His devotion was not that of a blind devotee. He had eyes of expectation, he was expecting the Messiah to come, who is "the consolation of Israel."

25, 26. *And the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

That which the Holy Ghost reveals will assuredly come to pass, as it did in the experience of old Simeon.

27. *And he came by the Spirit into the temple:*

Men who have the Spirit will be led by the Spirit. Simeon came into the temple at the right moment. Just when a young man was entering, with his wife and new-born child, "He came by the Spirit into the temple."

27, 28. *And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, then took he him up in his arms,*

He came in, I say, at the right time. Did ever anybody, who was not led by the Spirit, find Christ? Somebody has come in here to-night, and he does not know why he has come; but he has been led here by the Spirit that he may see Jesus, and may have such a sight of him as shall be his salvation. God grant that it may be proved that many an aged Simeon has travelled here this Sabbath night, led by the Spirit for this purpose, to find the Saviour in his own house!

28, 32. *And blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

Simeon had studied the ancient prophecies to good purpose, and he perceived from them that "the Lord's Christ" would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles" as well as "the glory of" God's ancient people, "Israel."

33. *And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*

We may be very near to Christ, and yet know very little about him. Joseph and the virgin mother did not understand "those things which were spoken of him." One wonders it was so after all that had been revealed to them; we marvel that they marvelled.

34. *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel;*

Do you understand that? Whenever Christ comes to a man, there is a fall first, and a rising again afterwards. You never knew the Lord aright if he did not give you a fall first. He pulls us down from our pride and self-sufficiency, and then he lifts us up to a position of eternal safety. He is "set" for this purpose; this is the great design of Christ's coming: "This child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

34. *And for a sign which shall be spoken against;*

Christ and his gospel will always be spoken against. If you know a gospel which is approved by the age, and patronized by the learned, that gospel is a lie. You may be sure of that; but if it be spoken against, if it be slandered, if it be called absurd, unscientific, and I know not what, all that is in its favour.

35. (*Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,*)

This favoured woman had the greatest smart to go with her great honour. She saw the suffering and anguish of her son; and the nearer you are to Christ, the more of sorrow it will cost you, sorrow which you may be well content to bear. You know how it is put in that hymn of which many of us are very fond,—

> "If I find him, if I follow,
> What his guerdon here?
> 'Many a labour, many a sorrow,
> Many a tear.'"

Yet, I say again, you may be well content to bear it all for his sake; for you remember what the next verse of the hymn is,—

> "If I still hold closely to him,
> What hath he at last?
> 'Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,
> Jordan past.'"

35. *That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Christ and his cross are the revealers of the thoughts of men's hearts. Men's hearts can conceal their thoughts until Christ's cross comes near; then the old enmity rises up, the heart rebels, and we see what is really in men's hearts.

36, 37. *And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.*

It would have been a pity for Christ to have been received in the temple only by a man. There must be a woman there, too, to join in Simeon's swan song, and to unite her testimony with his.

38. *And she coming in that instant—*

God knows how to time what we call our accidental walks: "She coming in that instant"—

38. *Gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*

So that the song of Simeon was sweetened by the voice of Anna, and they both rejoiced in God their Saviour; and their joy was shared by "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." May many of us have a share in that same joy as, by faith, we lovingly gaze upon "the Lord's Christ."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 889, 281.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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THE MEMORY OF CHRIST'S LOVE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 5TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, November 2nd, 1890.

"We will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee."—Song of Solomon i. 4.

I DO not think I can preach to-night; I feel so weary, and worn, and ill.* Still, I can talk to you a little concerning the great love of Christ. If I were dying, I think I could speak upon that theme; and oh, when we rise again, how we shall talk for ever and ever about Christ's love! This will be our endless theme throughout the eternal ages, "His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins."

I have taken for a text the last two sentences in the Song of Solomon, the first chapter, and the fourth verse: "We will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee."

This is a night for remembering Christ's love. The communion-table spread before us, the sacred feast to which we are about to come, is meant to recall to our minds our Saviour's words, "This do in remembrance of me. . . . This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." But, while we remember Christ, the central thought in our minds shall be that of which Paul wrote, "who loved me, and gave himself for me." We will, above all things else to-night, remember his love. Have any of you been forgetting it? Is it long since you had an hour's real enjoyment in meditating upon the love of Christ? Then, beloved, come to-night, and renew your vows; begin again your fellowship; and make this firm resolve, "We will remember our Lord; we will remember his love to-night!" May the Holy Spirit, who brings everything to remembrance whatsoever Christ has said to us, help us now to remember him! For him to remember us when he comes to his kingdom, will be our heaven. For us to remember him,

* It will be seen, by a reference to the end of the sermon, that the beloved preacher had to retire from the platform for a little while during the service. Readers of the sermon will rejoice that he was so graciously helped to preach when "weary, and worn, and ill."

though he has gone away to his kingdom, shall be a little heaven to us to-night.

As I am able, I will talk with you briefly, first, upon *the preparations for the holy memory* mentioned in our text. We shall find them in the verse in which the text is embedded: "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee." When we have considered the preparations for the holy memory here referred to, I will speak upon *the divine subject of this holy memory:* "We will remember thy love more than wine." Then, thirdly, we will meditate upon *the divine product of this holy memory:* "The upright love thee," love thee because they remember thy love.

I. First, then, dear friends, as I may be helped by the Holy Spirit, I would remind you of THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS HOLY MEMORY. Here they are.

The first word is, "*Draw me.*" Lord, I would fain come at thee; but, like Mephibosheth, I am lame in both my feet. I would fain fly to thee; but my wings are broken; if, indeed, I ever had any. I cannot come to thee. I lie inert, and dead, and powerless. So the first preparation is, "Draw me." It is a sweet, gracious, efficacious exercise of divine power that I need and entreat. I say not, "Drive me;" but, "Lord, draw me." I say not, "Throw me there, or force me yonder;" but, "Lord, draw me. Whilst thou dost draw, I shall have liberty left to run: draw me, we will run after thee."

We do not need to be born again; we who are believers in Christ have had that miracle wrought upon us already. We are not asking now for pardon and justification; as believers in Christ, we have these priceless boons already. What we want is the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit to attract us nearer to Christ; so each one cries to the Lord, "Draw me." We are not dead; we are quickened and made alive. Our very pain and anguish, because we are not able to come to Christ as we would, prove that we are alive. I commend this prayer to you, "Lord, draw me; draw me." It is the work of Christ to draw. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is the work of the Father. "No man can come to me," said Christ, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him." It is the work of the Spirit of God to draw a soul towards Christ. I pray this for myself, and I trust that you will pray with me, "Come, Sacred Spirit, and draw us nearer to Christ; enliven our hopes; incline our hearts; arouse our desires; and then help us to yield our whole being to thy gracious influences!"

> **"If thou hast drawn a thousand times,**
> **Oh, draw me, Lord, again!"**

That, then, is the first preparation for the holy memory mentioned in our text, divine drawing: "Draw me."

Notice, next, that this verse says, "Draw me, *we will run after thee.*" I like the change in the pronouns, as though I should pray to-night, "Lord, draw me; I am the most weighted, the heaviest of all thy children in this congregation; but draw me, we will run after thee. All my brothers and sisters will run at once if thou dost draw me. If thou dost draw the most burdened one towards thyself, all the rest

will come to thee at a rapid rate." Do you not feel, my dear brother or sister, as if you could use this expression? Lord, if thou wilt draw me, all my fellow-members will be running with me; yet they will not outstrip me in their eagerness to reach thee, for we will together run after thee. Do, therefore, draw me, my gracious Lord!

If we would be fully prepared to remember Christ, we must get into this running pace: "Draw me: we will run after thee." Be quick, my soul, be quick, about heavenly things! Creep, if thou wilt, about thy worldly business; but run after thy Lord. Oh, that we might every one attain the running pace to-night! Oh, that we might speed along towards our Lord with that strong, impetuous desire which will not let us rest till we are close to him: "Draw me, we will run after thee."

Divine drawing is the first preparation for the holy memory, and next comes speedy running.

Now, in the further preparation, if you read the verse through, you will find that an answer comes to the prayer directly it is uttered: "*The king hath brought me into his chambers.*" "What I asked for, I have obtained at once; and I have received more than I asked for. I prayed, 'Draw me,' and he hath carried me bodily. 'The king hath brought me into his chambers.' I did but pray that I might come a little nearer to my Lord; but he has brought me into his secret places, into his withdrawing rooms. He has brought me where he brings his bride. He has brought me where he receives his courtiers. The King has brought me into his chambers; and now I see how truly royal he is. The King has done it. *The* King, not *a* king; but that King who is King of all kings, the most royal of all monarchs, 'the Prince of the kings of the earth,' even my Lord Jesus, hath brought me into his chambers."

How quickly this was done! I want you to believe, beloved, that it could be done just as quickly in your case. Pray, "Lord, draw me. I feel as if I were coming to the communion-table quite unfit to come." Is that what you say? Then pray, "Draw me," and in a moment, before the prayer is uttered, you shall find yourself not only drawn, but actually brought into the secret place of fellowship. "The king hath brought me into his chambers." "Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Ammi-nadib." I know, and some of you know, unhappily, what it is to feel very cold and lifeless; but I also know, and some of you know, what it is to become full of life, full of love, full of joy, full of heavenly rapture, in a single moment. You who could only creep begin to run. You who could only sigh begin to sing. I want it to be so with every one of you, dearly beloved, to-night. And you, who think you are forgotten, shall be remembered to-night, at any rate. You who have almost forgotten what a real, hallowed time of communion means, may learn it over again to-night, as you cry, "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers."

Thus we have had three preparations for the holy memory mentioned in our text: drawing, running, and bringing.

There is only one more preparation for remembering Christ, and that is to feel gladness and joy in him: "*We will be glad and rejoice in*

thee." Come, take those ashes from thy head, thou that art sighing by reason of affliction! Come, unbind that sackcloth, and throw it aside, thou that hast lost fellowship with God, and art consequently in the dark! Christ is yours if you believe in him. He has given himself to you, and he loves you. Rejoice in that blessed fact. Remember who he is, and what he is; very God of very God, yet perfect man, God in human nature, Immanuel, God with us, glorified now in the highest heavens, though once, for our sakes, he sank down into the very depths of death and the grave. Bless his dear name. Be glad and rejoice in him.

Now, I pray you, let your mouth be filled with laughter, your tongue with singing, and your heart with holy ecstasy, as you think of who your Well-beloved is, how great he is, and what greatness he puts upon you by virtue of his union with you. We cannot very well remember Christ as we should while we carry about with us a heavy heart. Come, sad spirit, be glad in the Lord! "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." If ever a human soul had reason to rejoice, it must be the soul that believes in Christ. If ever there were any of the sons of Adam who had cause to be glad, and to clap their hands with holy mirth, it is the men who have found Christ to be their salvation, and their all in all.

These, then, are the preparations for the holy memory of which our text speaks. If they be well made, you will have no difficulty in remembering Christ's love to-night.

II. So now, in the second place, as I may be strengthened, I would like to speak about THE DIVINE SUBJECT OF THIS HOLY MEMORY: "We will remember *thy love.*"

First, we will remember *the fact of Christ's love.* What a wonderful thing it is that the Son of God should love us! I do not wonder so much that he should have any love for you; but I am lost in wonder at the fact that he has any love for me, even for me. Does not each believer feel that the wonder of wonders must ever be that the Lord Jesus Christ loves him? He was in glory, wanting nothing. He was in his Father's bosom, enjoying ineffable delight. If he wanted to cast his eyes of love on any of his creatures, there were myriads of bright spirits before the throne. But, no, he must look down, down, down, to earth's dunghills, and find out us who were utterly unworthy of his regard. Then he might have pitied us, and left us in our lost estate; but it could not be so with one who has such a heart as our dear Saviour has; he must needs love us. What it is for God to love, God only knows. We faintly guess, by the love that burns in our bosom towards the objects of our affection, what the love of God must be. The love of God must be a mighty passion. I use the word because I know no better; I am conscious that it is not the right one, for human language is too feeble to describe divine love.

> "Stronger his love than death or hell;
> Its riches are unsearchable:
> The first-born sons of light
> Desire in vain its depths to see;
> They cannot reach the mystery,
> The length, and breadth, and height."

Oh, the love of Christ! It must ever be the wonder of wonders that Jesus Christ, the darling of the heavens, should have set the eyes of his affection upon men of mortal mould, on sinful men, on me! That, to me, is the climax.

We will remember the fact of Christ's love.

But we will remember, also, *the character of Christ's love.* What a love it was! He loved us before the foundation of the world. With the telescope of his prescience, he foresaw our existence, and he loved us when we had no being. Then he struck hands with the great Father, and entered into covenant on our behalf, and engaged that he would stand sponsor for us, and redeem us from the ruin of our sin. Oh, the love, the love, the everlasting love of Christ! He has never left off loving us from the very first. All through the ages before the world was, and through the centuries in which the world has existed, he has loved his chosen every moment, and loved them to the full. Can you drink in the sweetness of that thought? Oh, I pray you, remember the antiquity and the constancy of the love of Christ to his people! "We will remember thy love."

It was unmerited love, which had no reason in us for it to light upon.

> "What was there in you that could merit esteem,
> Or give the Creator delight?
> 'Twas even so, Father,' you ever must sing,
> 'Because it seem'd good in thy sight.'"

He loved us because he would love us. It was the sovereignty of his love that made him love those whom he chose to love. He loved them freely, without anything in them, or that would ever be done by them, to deserve his love. But he loved fully as well as freely; he loved intensely, divinely, immeasurably. Thou knowest thy love to thy child; it is but a feeble spark compared to the great sun of Christ's love to thee. Thou knowest thy love to thy husband; it is a tiny rill compared with the ocean of Christ's love to his people. Beloved, turn over the wondrous qualities of the love of Christ to you, and say, as you sit at the communion-table to-night, "We will remember thy love, for we cannot forget it. We will remember thy love, for the joyous theme forces itself upon us. We will remember thy love more than wine."

We will also remember *the deeds of Christ's love.* It is a grand story; I cannot stay to tell it to you to-night. You know how, in the fulness of time, the Son of God came out of the glory, and alighted on a stall where the horned oxen fed. He who had made all worlds was hanging at a woman's breast, for he was made flesh that he might save us from our sins. "Herein is love!" See him living a laborious life, going about doing good, despised, maligned, yet ever ready to give still greater grace and mercy to the unworthy. You know his life, the wondrous life of Christ. "Herein is love." At last, he gave himself up in agony even to a bloody sweat. He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; he hid not his face from shame and spitting. And then he gave himself, his hands to the nails, his feet to the cross and the cruel iron, his side to the lance,

his body to the tomb, his soul to depart to his Father. "Herein is love." I wish I could preach upon this theme as it deserves to be proclaimed. Oh, that I knew how to speak of the dying love of Christ! The angels desire to look into the mystery of the love of Jesus; but even they cannot compass its immeasurable height, and depth, and length, and breadth. Will not each of us, who are the objects of it, remember his dying love?

"When to the cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God! my sacrifice!
I must remember thee.

"Remember thee, and all thy pains,
And all thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember thee!"

But Jesus rose from the grave. He rose with the same love; he ascended with the same love; he lives with the same love, pleading for us. He loves us now; and he will come for us in love. Love shall give him wings to fly down to earth again. He will reign here; but not without his people. "The Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." He will reign for ever in love. Evermore, throughout the life to come, and the ages that shall never end, Christ will rest in his love, he will rejoice over his people with joy, he will joy over them with singing. He will also give them to share his glory, and to sit upon his throne, and to reign with him for ever and ever.

Oh, what a theme is this, the deeds of Christ's love! In trying to talk of it, I feel like a poor schoolboy standing here, speaking on a subject he loves. Oh, that there were a Milton, or some one of Miltonic calibre, to tell out the story of this great love of Christ! Yet, mayhap, the theme is better with my poor description than it would be with the loftiest words of men, because you are more likely to forget the description, and to remember the love that cannot be described; whereas, had my discourse been filled with lofty and worthy diction, you might have forgotten the theme, and remembered the speaker.

I would like you, brothers and sisters, to-night, to remember *the proofs of Christ's love*. You were far off, but he sought you, and brought you back. You were deaf, but he called you, and opened your ear to hear his loving call. You came trembling, and afraid, but he cheered you; and in a moment he took your burden from you, and set you free. Do you remember it?

"Dost mind the place, the spot of ground,
Where Jesus did thee meet?"

I remember, to-night, the place where first I saw the Lord; I know it to a yard. Some of you cannot speak as definitely as that, and you need not blush because you cannot. Did Jesus come to you? Did he forgive your sins? Did he comfort you with his love? Then remember it to-night. Never mind about dates and places; but remember his love.

Since Jesus first came to you, and saved you, many a time you have been in trouble, and he has comforted you. You have been in labour; and he has sustained you. You have been in disrepute; but he has honoured you. Alas, you have proved yourself unworthy of his love; but he has forgiven your backslidings. You have wandered from him; but he has restored you. Remember his great love.

No word of mine will, I fear, help you much; but let your memory begin to run over the pages of your diary. Turn over the leaves that record your Lord's favour to you. Are there not some pages with great crosses upon them, which you made in the day of trouble, and other crosses, which you made in the hour of your deliverance when Jesus came to your relief? Oh, remember his love, remember his love more than wine!

I will not detain you on this point any longer; although there was much more I wanted to say. Only, brothers and sisters, if I cannot talk to you, do the thing that we are thinking about. Do remember Christ and his great love. Do now, before you partake of the emblems of his broken body and his shed blood, get to him. You may forget everything else if you like; but I charge you remember Christ's love. There, fling overboard every other recollection, however precious! Let the golden ingots go; but hold you fast to the true lading of the ship, her real cargo, the love wherewith Christ hath loved us. Do remember that, and sit still, and enjoy the blessed memory.

Before I come to the last division of my subject, I should like to ask whether there are any here who cannot remember Christ's love because they never knew it. Is that your case, my dear friend, over yonder? Let me remind you of the lepers of whom we have been reading, and then let me recall to your minds God's ancient law concerning the man suffering from leprosy. When he was brought for the high priest to examine him, the high priest looked him up and down, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, and he said to the leper, "Here is a place still on thy breast where thy flesh is perfectly clean;" and the leper said, "Yes, I am pleased to see that it is so." But the high priest replied, "You are unclean, you must not go into the house of the Lord, or associate with the people." Then there came another, and he searched him all over, and said, "Here, upon this part of your leg, there is a sound place still." "Yes," said the other, "I have often thought what a good sign it was." "You also are unclean," said the high priest, "Go to your separate house, and abide there." Then there came one poor man who was white all over, and the high priest said to him, "Have you any clean places?" "No, my lord, not one; examine me, and see;" and the high priest looked, and there was not a clean spot on him where you could have put a pin's point; but the leprosy was all over him, he was saturated all through with the deadly virus, and foul with the loathsome disease; and there he stood, and cowered and trembled before the high priest. Then the high priest said to him, "Behold, thou art clean; when thou hast performed the ceremony required by the law, thou mayest go home to thy house, and to the house of thy God, for thou art clean." There was a medical reason,

I suppose, for this law; the mischief had thrown itself out, it had come out to the skin, the disease was fully developed, and would soon be removed. But, whatever may have been the medical reason, such was the law; and if I am addressing anybody here who feels, "There is nothing good about me; I am unclean, unclean, unclean, from the crown of my head to the sole of my foot, and the lowest place in hell is my desert," my friend, the grace of God has begun to work in you. Now that you are emptied, God will begin to fill you. Trust you in the atoning sacrifice of his dear Son, and you shall have the assurance that you also are the subject of his saving grace; his love shall be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost; and you shall join with us in remembering that great love wherewith he hath loved us.

III. The last thing upon which I have to speak to you is this, THE DIVINE PRODUCT OF THIS HOLY MEMORY: "The upright love thee."

So it seems, then, that if we remember Christ, *we shall have a respect for his people.* His people are the upright; and she, who speaks in the sacred Canticle, here looks round upon them, and says, "The upright love thee." "That commends thee to me; for if they who are of a chaste spirit love thee, much more should I." I think, if you feel as I do sometimes, you would be glad to be sure that you were even the least in God's house. We know the upright love Christ, and we love the upright because they do so; and we esteem Christ because, the better men are, the more they think of him. Is it not so? But sometimes we are afraid we are not among the number of the chosen ones. "The upright love thee." Lord, am I one of the upright? Our hymn puts it, even concerning heaven,—

> "There ye that love my Saviour sit,
> There I would fain have place,
> Among your thrones, or at your feet,
> So I might see his face."

Would we not gladly sit at the feet of the very least of his people if we might but love Christ? They love him. I know how you look about you to-night, and you say, "There sits Brother So-and-so, he loves Christ; there is Mistress So-and-so, who is so busy in the service of her Lord, she loves Christ. And that dear man (Mr. William Olney), whose death we still commemorate by these sad memorials around the pulpit, he loved Christ." "Ah, well!" you say, "I wish I loved him, too, and that I were among the upright in character, who truly admire him." Seek that blessing, dear friends, for it is to be had if you seek it aright. Seek it, for the love of Christ will make you love the upright, and foster in you an esteem for them. I do not like to hear Christian people speak ill of one another; and I do not like to hear Christian people speak ill of the Church. If Christ loves her, and is married to her, woe to you if you find fault with my Master's bride! He loves not those who love not his chosen. Have a great love for the people of God, even the poorest of them. Count them to be the aristocrats of the world, the blood-royal of the universe, the men and women who have angels to be their servants, and who are made kings and priests unto God. If you remember Christ, you will remember his people. If you remember his love, you will feel a love towards them. God grant that you may do so!

One thing more, and I have done. In remembering Christ's love as the upright do, *we shall grow upright.* I believe that God blesses trouble to our sanctification, and that he can bless joy to the same end; but I am sure of this, that the greatest instrument of sanctification is the love of Jesus. One asked what he should think of to make him holy, and his friend answered, "Think of death." It is wise to talk with the grave, the mattock, and the shroud; but the living love of Christ has a sanctifying power that even thoughts of death have not. One has said, "If thou wouldst grow holy, think of the punishment of sin, the pit that God has digged for the wicked. It will make thee tremble at the thought of sin, and cause thee to flee from it as from an arch-destroyer." This is true; but still, if thou wouldst grow in grace fast, and become holy rapidly, this is the best theme for thy meditation, "We will remember thy love." If you will remember Christ's love, you will be lifted up from your crookedness, and made straight, and put among the upright, who love the Lord.

Come, then, let us join to-night in sweet thoughts of love to Christ. The sermon is short, but the subject is long; and you have now an opportunity for coming to the communion-table, and thinking out that theme which I have started for you, "The love of Christ to me, the love of Christ to me." Then follow it up with this, "Oh, my poor love to Christ!" Think, dear friends, if you remember your own love to Christ, what a small thing it is to remember. His great love is like the sun in the heavens. Your love—well, you have to put on your spectacles before you can see it; it is so small a thing. God grant it may grow to-night; and, at the communion-table, may you have such a visitation from Christ, such delightful fellowship with him, that you may be able to sing again the hymn that you were singing when I was obliged to retire for a while from the platform,—

"My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine,
For thee all the follies of sin I resign;
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour, art thou,
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

"I will love thee in life, I will love thee in death,
And praise thee as long as thou lendest me breath;
And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow,
'If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.'"

May you sing it now, and be able to sing it when the death-dew lies cold on your brow! The Lord be with you, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXIII., AND LUKE XVII. 11—19.

We will read, this evening, two passages in the Word of God; the first will be Psalm cxiii.

Verse 1. *Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.*

Three times are you stirred up to this duty of praise. Adore the Sacred Trinity with threefold praise. There is a trinity in you: let spirit, soul, and body praise the Lord. Let the past, the present, and the future make another threefold chord; and for each of these, "Praise ye the Lord. Praise, O ye servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord."

2, 3. *Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.*

"From the rising of the sun until the going down of the same the Lord's name is to be praised." In hours of morning light, when the dew is on the grass, and our soul is full of gladness, and in the hours of the setting sun, when the day is weary, and the night seems coming on, still let the Lord have the praise that is his due, for he is always to be praised.

There is never an hour in which it would be unseemly to praise God. For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven; but the praising of God is never out of season. All time and all eternity may be dedicated to this blessed work.

4, 5. *The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,*

The loftiness, the majesty, the sublimity of God are attributes that are terrible in themselves; yet they minister much joy to those who love the Lord. For, you know, we can never make too much of those whom we love; and if we see them exalted, then is our soul glad. Would you wish to have a little God? Would you wish to have a God who had but little honour, or little power? No; you ascribe to him all conceivable and all inconceivable greatness, and you exult as you think what a high and mighty God he is. "Who is like unto Jehovah our God, who dwelleth on high?"

6. *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!*

It enables us to get some faint idea of the greatness of God when we read that he has to humble himself even to look at the things in heaven, perfect and spotless though they be. Dr. Watts truly sings,—

> "The lowest step around thy seat
> Rises too high for Gabriel's feet;
> In vain the tall archangel tries
> To reach thine height with wond'ring eyes."

All the faculties of all the angels cannot comprehend the Infinite. When the Lord looks down to us, how much he must humble himself! If he humbleth himself to see the things in heaven which are clear and pure, what humility is required that he may look upon the things on the earth!

7, 8. *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.*

Have you never noticed that, in all these joyous songs to God, there is almost always one of these notes, that God abases the proud, and exalts the humble? This was the basis of Hannah's song; and it was the pith and marrow of Mary's *Magnificat:* "He hath put down the mighty from

their seats, and exalted them of low degree." This wonderful turning of things upside down; this withering of the green tree, and making the dry tree to flourish; this killing that which liveth, and quickening that which is dead; this emptying of the full, and filling of the empty; this casting down the mighty from their thrones, and lifting the poor out of the dust; this is always one of the highest reasons for exulting joy. What a truth there is for you and for me to-night, if we feel ourselves to be spiritually so poor that the dunghill is no offence to us, because we feel ourselves to be even more offensive than the filthy things that are cast away by men! What a mercy it is that the Lord "lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people"!

9. *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the* LORD.

Does your soul feel barren? May the Lord grant unto it an abundant fruitfulness! Looking back upon the past year, perhaps you have had many barren times, or times that you have thought to be barren. If you are a minister of the gospel, I should not wonder if those have been your most fruitful seasons. When you have been most empty, God has been pleased to feed the people through you. O dear brothers and sisters, those very times of spiritual experience which are most humiliating and most painful are often the most soul-enriching to us, and they also bring the greatest glory to God!

Now we will read a New Testament story, in order that we may see how some men did not praise the Lord as they should have done. You will find the narrative in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke, at the eleventh verse.

Luke xvii. Verse 11. *And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.*

There is but One of whom we will think to-night, our divine Lord, who was on his way to Jerusalem. Passing along the frontiers of Samaria and Galilee, he had the Jews on one side of him, and the Samaritans on the other. He took a middle course, as if to show how he was going up to the New Jerusalem, loaded with blessings for the Jews on one side, and Gentiles on the other.

12. *And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers,*

Oh, the abundance of human misery that met the Saviour's eye: "ten men that were lepers"! I was reading only yesterday of what happened in Westminster, many years ago. When the king went along the highway, there were crowds of poor lepers on either side of the road, a shocking sight to see in this dear land of ours; and the king, in his tender mercy, simply passed a law that the lepers should not come near the road again to shock his gracious majesty with their misery. That is all he had to do for them; but our glorious King treated lepers very differently: "There met him ten men that were lepers."

12. *Which stood afar off:*

The rule was that they should never come upon the public road, or near the highway, lest the disease should be taken by others who might come near them.

13. *And they lifted up their voices,*

Not much of voices were they likely to have, for the leprosy dries the throat, and the voice is low and husky, and when lepers cry, "Unclean, unclean," it is an awfully sad sound, but very weak. These ten lepers lifted up their poor voices.

13. *And said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.*

They raised a plain cry, and the whole ten of them had to lift up their voices before they could be well heard.

14. *And when he saw them,*

Even before he heard them, he saw their pitiable condition.

14. *He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests.*

That is all Jesus said to the lepers: "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." They were not to go to the priests till they were clean, for the priests could not heal them. It was the healed man who went to the priests to get a certificate that he was healed, and so might mingle in society again. It was a strange message, then, that the Saviour gave to these lepers: "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." And oh, the faith of these men! With only this shell of a promise, as it were, they cracked it, and found a promise inside it, for they said to themselves, "He would not send us to the priests for nothing; he would not mock our misery; he must mean to heal us:" and therefore away they went. A grand faith this! You are to come to Christ before you feel any grace in you; you are not to wait until you feel you are healed, and then come to him. Come just as you are, without any sense of grace, or any kind of feeling within you that is worth the having. Come just as you are.

14. *And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.*

As the sinner believes, he is saved. As a man begins to go towards the Saviour, the Saviour's grace meets him.

15. *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed,*

They all saw that they were healed, and they all must have felt extremely glad. Oh, the happiness of feeling the hot blood cooled, and full health taking the place of languor and disease!

15. *Turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.*

This was a sure sign that he was healed, that he had his voice back; the disease had so thoroughly gone that the sound, which seemed to hide away in his husky throat, now came out clear and loud, like the stroke of a bell.

16. *And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks:*

When I read these words just now, I thought, that is where I would like to be, and that is what I would like to do, all my life, to fall down, "at his feet, giving him thanks."

16. *And he was a Samaritan.*

Ah, me! nine of the seed of Israel were ungrateful, and only one poor outcast Gentile was grateful to the Lord for the miracle of healing that had been wrought.

17—19. *And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.*

May the Lord Jesus thus speak to many a poor, leprous sinner here to-night! "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—786, 804, 944.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S PEOPLE, OR NOT GOD'S PEOPLE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God."—Hosea ii. 23.

"As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."—Romans ix. 25.

To my mind, it is very instructive to notice how Paul quotes from the Prophets. The revelation of the mind of God in the Old Testament helps us to understand the gospel revealed in the New Testament. There is no authority that is so powerful over the minds of Christian men as that of the Word of God. Has God made known any truth in his Word? Then, it is invested with divine authority. Paul, being himself inspired by the Holy Spirit, and therefore able to write fresh revelations of the mind of God, here brings the authority of God's Word in the olden times to back up and support what he says: "As he saith also in Osee."

Beloved friend, if you are seeking salvation, or if you want comfort, never rest satisfied with the mere word of man. Be not content unless you get the truth from the mouth of God. Say in your spirit, "I will not be comforted, unless God himself shall comfort me. I want chapter and verse for that which I receive as gospel." Our Lord's reply to Satan was, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Give me, then, but a word out of God's mouth, and I can live upon it; but all the words out of man's mouth, apart from divine inspiration, must be as unsatisfying food as if men tried to live on stones.

Notice, again, how Paul teaches that the very essence of the authority of the Scriptures lies in this, that *God* speaks through his revealed Word: "As HE saith also in Osee." It is God speaking in the Bible whom we ought to hear. The mere letter of the Word alone will kill; but when we hear God's voice speaking in it, then it has power which it could not possess otherwise. It is a blessed thing to put your ear down to the promises of Scripture, till you hear God

speaking through them to your soul. It is truly profitable to read a gospel commandment, and to listen to its voice until God himself speaks it with power to your heart. I pray you, do not regard anything that is preached here unless it agrees with what is written there in the Bible. If it is only my word, throw it away; but if it is God's truth that I declare to you, if God himself speaks it through my lips, you will disregard it at your peril.

I will make only one other observation by way of introduction. Is it not wonderful how God's Word is preserved century after century? There were seven or eight hundred years between Hosea and Paul; and it is remarkable that the promise to the Gentiles should lie asleep all that time, and yet should be just as full of life and power when Paul was quoting it after all those centuries. God's Word is like the wheat in the hand of the mummy, of which you have often heard. It had lain there for thousands of years; but men took it out of the hand, and sowed it, and there sprang up the bearded wheat which has now become so common in our land. So you take a divine promise, spoken hundreds or thousands of years ago, and lo, it is fulfilled to you! It becomes as true to you as if God had spoken it for the first time this very day, and you were the person to whom it was addressed. O blessed Word of God, how we ought to prize thee! We cannot tell yet all that lies hidden between these covers; but there is a treasury of grace concealed here, which we ought to seek until we find it.

Having thus introduced our texts as taken from God's Word in the Old and New Testaments, and as being God's voice to us, speaking adown the centuries with all the freshness and force it would have if it were uttered anew to-night, I invite every unconverted person to listen with both his ears, and his whole heart, to hear if there shall drop some living word of cheer and promise that shall make this evening to be his birthnight. If so, this shall be the time wherein his captivity shall be ended, his mouth shall be filled with laughter, and his tongue with singing, and his spirit shall rejoice in God his Saviour.

I. Now, first, in considering the words in the Epistle to the Romans, let us look at THE ORIGINAL STATE OF GOD'S PEOPLE. "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

If we look at the original state of God's people, we shall gaze upon a very gloomy picture. Yet this portrait reveals the state in which every unconverted man is to-night, the state in which all of us, who are now saved, once were. We were not God's people; that is to say, *we had not God's approval.* I speak now of all those whom God has saved. There was a time when there was no approval of them; as the apostle says, "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." So was it with those who were not God's people; their thoughts were contrary to God's thoughts; their ways were such as God could not endure; their speech grated in his ears; they followed the devices and imaginations of their own hearts; the prince of this world had dominion over them, and God's grace had not been displayed upon them. They went astray like lost sheep. That is your condition to-night, sinner, you are the object of divine disapproval. "Not beloved", says the text. "Not

beloved." How can you be beloved of God? How can the Lord take any delight in a man who takes no delight in his God, who tries not even to think of him, who breaks his law with impunity, and finds pleasure in that which God abhors? "Not my people", says the text, that is, they were not the subjects of divine approval.

Next, such people *receive from God no good thing of the highest order.* "Oh!" say some, "but we are receiving all sorts of temporal blessings from God." I know you are, and you ought to thank him for them; but as you are not his people, and not beloved, even these good things turn out to be evil things to you. Your table becomes a snare and a trap to you. Men who receive God's mercies before his grace has brought them to himself, make idols of the good things he bestows upon them. They receive benefits at his hands, and use them to provoke him to anger. They take of their wealth, and they say, with the rich fool, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" and so they forget that they must die, and they forget their God. Oftentimes, even health and strength become a snare to men. They will plunge into greater sin because they have so much vigour of body. We have known some, who have been so robust in health that they would not think of God, or of Christ, or of their souls, or of eternity. I tell you, sinners, that while you are as you are, God's curse rests upon your blessings. There is no good thing out of Christ; for that which would be good with Christ becomes evil without Christ; it becomes a thing which destroys rather than blesses, and which helps men the more rapidly to destroy their souls. Oh, what a sad state is yours of whom God says, "They are not my people, and they are not beloved"! While they are as they are, they cannot receive the highest good from God; even the best thing that he sends them they turn into evil.

Remember, too, you who know not God, that you are in a very miserable condition, because to you there is *no application of the precious blood of Christ.* Jesus died for sinners; but you pass by his cross as though you had nothing to do with it. Israel in Egypt was saved because God saw the blood, and passed over the houses of his people; but you are not beneath that crimson sign. You have never looked to Christ by faith. No blood is on the lintel and on the two side-posts of your door. All we can say of you, as we look at you, is "Not beloved: not beloved." Oh, poor souls, you who have not believed, what does the Scripture say to you? Why, that you are "condemned already" because you have not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. You who have not believed in Christ are lying in the wicked one; and what does that expression mean? Why, lying in his bosom, as if you were the darling children of the devil. How can there be any sign of the divine delight or complacency towards you while your delight is in Satan and in sin? No, you have no interest in the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, me! What should I do if this were my case? I would sooner lose my eyes, my hearing, my sense of taste; I would sooner lose life itself than lose an interest in the precious blood of Jesus. Yet some of you live at ease though there has been for you no pardon of sin, no washing in the blood of sprinkling. You are still guilty before God.

Again, when these people were called by God "not my people", and "not beloved", there had been *no saving work of the Spirit of God upon them.* I am addressing some here to-night who have never had their hearts broken by the Spirit of God. They have never been brought to repentance, they have never been led to faith in Christ. Consequently, to them the Spirit of God is not a Quickener; to them he is not a Comforter; to them he is not an Illuminator. All his divine offices are fulfilled in other people; but not in them. They are strangers to that blessed power, without which no man can come to God, or believe in Christ. Oh, what a sad condition for any to be in —"not my people", and "not beloved"! They have no trace of that life which they would have if the Spirit of God had made them to pass from death unto life. God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living; and as long as you are dead in sin he is not your God in this special sense, neither does he call you his people.

Those who are in that sad state have *no relief in prayer.* They do not pray; they cannot pray. Now, when I am in trouble, I need nobody to advise me to pray. A trouble no sooner comes to me than I spread it before God, and I find a sweet relief at once. Oh, if there were no mercy-seat, I should wish that I had never been born! But there are some of you who never truly pray. Such prayers as you do offer have no heart in them, no life in them; and therefore God does not hear you, and you live on in this world without prayer. Men, how can you exist thus? Life must be to you like a burning desert, where every particle of sand blisters the foot that treads upon it. What can this world be to a prayerless man?

And as you are without prayer, so you are *without the promises of God to sustain you.* The wealth of God's people seldom lies in ready money. Their treasure consists mostly in promises to pay, promises which God has made to his own people. But for the ungodly there are no blessed promises. God will give nothing to you who will not even believe his Word. He has made no covenant with you who will not even trust his Son. You remain as he says,—it is not my word, but his,—"not my people", and "not beloved", as long as you are without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: whatever promises he has made to his people, you are without power to plead those promises at the throne of grace, for they do not belong to you.

In addition to all this, you are now *without any fellowship with God, or with his Son, Jesus Christ.* God made this world; but you never speak with the world's Maker. You are guardianed by his providence, and yet you have no fellowship with the God who ruleth over all. Why, the joy of life to some of us lies mainly in our fellowship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the very centre of the circle in which we move. He is the height and glory of our manhood; the all in all of our existence. We would not wish to live if it were not for him. He is the sun that makes our heaven bright; all would be dark without him; and yet some of you have no communion with him, perhaps not even any knowledge of him. Oh, my dear friend, you have no Christ, no Saviour, no communion with God, no fellowship with the Most High! What a terrible condition is yours!

Besides this, *you have no hope of heaven.* If you were to die as you

now are, what could be your eternal portion but to be driven from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power? The Lord Jesus would say of you, "I never knew them, I never knew them. They are not my people. They are not my beloved." Why, you have never even sought him; you have never cried to him; you have never forsaken the sin which he hates! You have never rested upon the atonement which he has made. You have never trusted in his living power to save. Ah, poor creatures that you are, how I do pity you! "Do not call us poor," say you. "We are rich, we are increased in goods, and have need of nothing." So much the worse is your poverty, because of your fancied wealth. It will be an awful thing to go from your well-spread table to the place where you will be denied a drop of water to cool your burning tongues. It will be a terrible thing if you go from the weakness and sickness of the dying bed at once to stand before your God, to be driven from the pangs of your last moments into that dread position of a culprit, unpardoned, to receive sentence from the great Judge of all. "Not my people", and "not beloved." I cannot bear the thought of your doom; and I can say no more on that terrible theme.

II. But now, in the second place, I have to speak of THE NEW CONDITION OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Listen, and as you listen, may God make it to be your new condition! There are many in this world to whom my text has been proved to be true: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved."

Now see the change which God can make. It is God who makes it. The very same people of whom he said, "They are not my people," he now calls his people. Ay, and in the very place where he said that they were not his people, he says they are the people of the living God. Now, what if to-night I have been saying of such and such that they are not God's people? But what if, before they leave this place, God should say to them, "You are my people"? Oh, what a blessed change would have taken place in them! Let me describe it.

If the Lord shall say to us to-night, "Ye are my people, and ye are my beloved," then we shall know, first, that *he thinks upon us,* that his mind is toward us, that he has a kindly regard for us, that he takes delight in us, that his heart is set on doing us good. Oh, ye who do love the Lord, and are his children, do think of this, you have the thoughts of God running towards you in streams of ever-abounding tenderness, and mercy, and goodness, and faithfulness!

And, as the Lord thinks of us, *he speaks to us.* Oh, to think that the Lord should speak to those who were not his people once, and speak to them so effectually as to make his sweet promises enter into their ears, yea, into their hearts, and should become familiar to them, for "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant"! Oh, how sweetly does God commune with his own children! How he does open up his very heart to them, and make them to know him, even as Jesus manifests himself unto his chosen as he does not unto the world! It is a choice privilege of a child of God to be thought of, and then to be spoken to by the Lord.

More than that, *God hears us speak.* When we are his people, and

his beloved, then our accents become sweet in his ears. You know that your dear children often speak very poorly and badly, and other people do not care much to listen to their talk; but to a father's ear the sound of his own child's voice is always sweet. You have been away from home for some weeks. I know that you are longing to hear the dear prattlers once again. Well, like as a father loves the voice of his child, so does our heavenly Father love the voices of his beloved whom he calls his people, and he has regard to what they say, he hearkens to the voice of their cry.

Then, beloved, he not only hears us, but *he grants us our desire.* He will come to our deliverance in the time of trouble. He will bestow upon us all good things: "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Oh, the privileges of those who are God's people! The theme is too vast for human language to compass.

One special mark of our new condition is that the Lord *forgives our sin.* Once we were loaded with sin; but now we have not a single sin left upon us. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin. Paul challenges the whole universe to lay anything to the charge of God's elect, for God has justified them. "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Oh, the heaped-up blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! And that is true of all whom God calls his people, though they once were not his people.

And then, dear friends, sin being forgiven, the Lord *works all things for our good.* Whether we are joyous or depressed, if we are the Lord's people, all is working for our good. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Our losses and our crosses, our bereavements and our bodily pains, as well as our rapturous joys and our highest delights, are all working out the best results for us.

More than this, when we are in trouble, *God pities us;* for "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Ay, and *he sends us relief,* too, according to that word of David, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." What is better still, *God dwells in us,* as he said, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." And the Holy Spirit has come, and taken up his abode in these mortal bodies, and he dwells there, our Teacher and our Comforter, our Guide and our Friend.

By and by, *the Lord Jesus will come again, and receive us unto himself,* that where he is there we may be also. I wish I had the tongues of men and of angels that I might tell you the splendour of the position of those who are the Lord's own people, the Lord's own beloved. And who where these people once? I come back to my text again. They were not God's people, and not beloved: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." Now then, some of you, whom God cannot now look upon except with anger, why should he not look upon you with love to-night through Jesus Christ? He that believeth in Christ Jesus may have the blessed assurance that the Lord loves him, and that he is one of

the Lord's people. You may have come in here saying, "I belong to the devil. I am sure I do; I feel within my spirit that I am under his cruel sway. Alas! I have not a spark of grace, or a thought of goodness. I am as far off from God, and holiness, and heaven, as ever I can be." Then to you, may God say, "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved"! Oh, the magnificence of this grace that waits not for man, neither tarries for the sons of men, but works according to the eternal purposes of God, and accomplishes all his sovereign will!

III. This brings me, in the third place—going back to the text in Hosea—to notice THE GRAND RESULT OF THIS WONDERFUL CHANGE: "I will say to them which were not my people, thou art my people; and they shall say, thou art my God." Here is a dialogue between the Lord and his people. God says something to them, and they say something to him.

Remember that there is no change in God; it is only a change in our relation to him, because those who have become his people were really his people, in his everlasting purpose, from before the foundation of the world, though they were not actually so as to their own spiritual condition. But now, when this change comes to pass in their relations to God, see the grand result of it.

First, *the Lord says*, "*Thou art my people.*" Now I pray that the Lord may come to-night, and speak to some who never made mention of his name before, some who never knew him, who never trembled at his Word, never hoped in his mercy, never trusted in his Son, never, indeed, meant to be his people at all. I do trust that the Lord will now say to some of them, "Thou art my people." Oh, what a wonderful experience it is when the poor lost sinner finds out that he belongs to God, that he has been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, that God means to save him, that he will not let his Son's blood be shed for him in vain! I remember the shame and yet the joy that filled my soul when I first woke up to the consciousness of what Christ had done for me. I remember the confusion of face I felt because I had treated such a Saviour so badly; and yet I also felt intense delight in thinking that he loved me, notwithstanding all my sins. This is a text that comforted me,—I pray the Lord to send it home to some other heart,—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee;" and this one also, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Oh, if the Holy Spirit would apply those words with power to some sinner's heart to-night, what a running after God, what a seeking after Christ there would be!

"I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people." The Lord does not always say that to his people with equal force. At first, they half hope that it is so. They indistinctly hear his voice saying it; but as faith increases, they hear him say it more distinctly, "Thou art my people." I do feel that it is most gracious of God to call those his people that were not his people. You see that he gives them a new name, and that overrides the old one. I think that I hear some one saying, "I have found the Saviour." "What? What?" says somebody who knows you. "You? Heugh!

we all know what *you* were." Perhaps one says, "Ah, you know that you have been as bad as any of us!" Possibly in one case they might say, "You talk of being God's child? You are a fallen woman," or, "You have been a thief," or, "You have been a liar," or, "You have been a frequenter of places where God is forgotten, a lover of pleasure rather than a lover of God." Yes, but beloved, if the Lord says, "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine;" you can say to yourself, "They may say what they please about me, and I must own the truth of it all; but this word of the Lord, "Thou art mine," overrides it all.

What a blessed text this is for one who has lost his character, for one who has lost all repute! If you come to Christ, and believe in him, here is a text that applies to you. God says, "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." God can make "right honourables" out of those who are in themselves most dishonourable, and he can give them a name and a place among his people. Yet I can imagine God looking upon some one here to-night, and saying of such an one, "How can I put *him* among the children? What! put such a sinner among my children?" I can fancy there is somebody here who is so extremely sinful that, if I were to propose to God's people that he should be received among them, they would say, "We should not like to receive that man into the church." Ah, but when our heavenly Father welcomes home his prodigal son, he will not have the elder brother talk like that. He comes out, and reasons with him, and says, "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Jesus would have us receive the very chief of sinners, the jail-birds, the hell-birds, the men who have gone farthest astray, the men who have lost all hope, the most forlorn and self-condemned, the most dejected, distressed, devil-haunted men and women out of hell. These are just the people in whom the grace of God triumphs over all sin. "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved;" "and I will say to them, which were not my people, thou art my people."

When the Lord says this to any, their sin is put away. My Lord is a great Forgiver! My Lord, whom I preach to you to-night, who was once nailed to the cross, is able to save all them to the uttermost that come unto God by him. "He delighteth in mercy," it is his right-hand attribute, his last-born, his Benjamin. Never does he display his mercy more than when, like the mighty sea, his love rolls over the very tops of the mountains of iniquity, and covers them.

I close by noticing what the Lord's people say to him, "*They shall say, Thou art my God.*" That is the right saying for every one of the Lord's people, "Thou art my God." Poor sinner, may God the Holy Ghost help you to begin to say that, "Thou art my God"! Here is a text that should help you to say it, even as it helped me in the hour of my conversion, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." Will you look to God, sinner? Will you say to the Lord, "Thou art my God"? "My God, I have long forgotten thee, I have blasphemed thee, I

have rebelled against thee, I have desecrated thy Sabbath, I have decried thy gospel, I have ridiculed thy servants! But, behold, I look to thee, for I have sinned; have mercy upon me, for thy dear Son's sake!"

That is a good beginning; but may you have grace to advance beyond that experience, so that you may come and lay your hand on Christ the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, saying "This Saviour is my Saviour. I accept him as my Substitute, to stand in my room, and place, and stead"! When you have once rightly uttered this blessed sentence, "Thou art my God," God's grace will help you to keep on saying it. There is no getting further than this, "Thou art my God." That is the end of all good things. What more does a man want? What more can a man desire? There is not a good thing anywhere out of Christ. One of the old Puritans, in the days when nobody much liked going to sea, said, "When a man is in a ship, and in his own little cabin, if he casts his eye all around, and sees nothing but the wild waste of waters, without a sign of land anywhere, nothing but angry billows tossing the vessel up and down, if anyone says to him, 'Will you leave your little cabin? Will you leave your little ship?' 'No,' says he, 'where else can I go? There is nowhere else to go.'" That is just how I feel to-night about my Lord. My cabin, my ship, my Christ, my faith in him, gives me rest and peace. I cannot see anywhere else that I can go except to destruction and despair; so my soul says over again, "Thou art my God, thou art my God. Others may have what they will; but I will have my God. They may have what god they like; but thou, Triune Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, thou art my God, and on thee my soul doth rest, seeking no other confidence."

Will *you* say that to-night, my dear hearers? I do not know your cases; but I know that, if I want to get sheep into a fold, a good way is to set the gate open as widely as ever I can; and then another good way to entice the sheep in is to have rich pasture inside. Well, I have tried to set before you the rich, free grace of God to the very chief of sinners, and I have pointed to the opened door, that is wide enough to let the biggest sinner come through. Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." Now, if Noah's ark had a door that was big enough to let an elephant through, then it was big enough to let a dog through, or a fox, or a cat, or a mouse. You may come if you are the biggest sinner in the world; and I do not suppose that you are, for the biggest sinner died and went to heaven long ago. Paul says that he was the biggest sinner, the chief of sinners; and I believe that he knew what sized sinner he was. If there was room for him to go through the gate of salvation, there is room for you. May God's grace draw you this very night; and unto the God of all grace shall be the praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

HOSEA II. 5—23.

In this chapter God compares Israel to a woman who had been unfaithful to her husband in the very worst and most wicked manner.

Verse 5. *For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink.*

She attributed to false gods the gifts which God had given to her. This was great ingratitude to God, and a high insult to his holy majesty.

6. *Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths.*

That is what God does to sinners whom he means to save. He will not let them take their own course. He gives them thorny trials which hedge up their way. He puts an obstacle in their path; perhaps some sickness or poverty. When men are desperate in wickedness, God has a way of stopping them. Even in their mad career, his mighty grace comes in, and says, "So far shalt thou go, but no further."

7. *And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them:*

Thus sinners go after the pleasures of the world, and the pleasures run away from them. They make one thing their god, and then another; and they put out all their strength to attain the object of their ambition; and God thwarts them. In infinite love, he baffles all their endeavours because he means to bring them to himself.

7. *Then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now.*

That is what he brings us to; weary of the world, ay, weary of life itself, we get worn out in the ways of evil, and then we say, "I will go to God." What a blessed conclusion to come to! However terrible the whip with which he scourges us, it does us good. The fierce billow that washes the mariner upon the rock of safety, is a blessing to him.

8, 9. *For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax given to cover her nakedness.*

God claims the blessings of providence as his own; and when he sees his people misuse them, he says, "I will recover them. She is giving them to Baal, she is using them for an evil purpose; I will take them away."

10, 11. *And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.*

When God deals with men, he uses no half measures. If they have been very happy in the ways of sin, and he intends to save them from their evil courses; he will take away all their joy. They shall henceforth have none of the merriment in which they indulged. He will give them better happiness by-and-by; but for the time being it shall be true, "I will cause all her mirth to cease."

12. *And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them.*

Her most precious things shall be destroyed; or, if they are allowed to

exist, they shall become a cause of fear and trouble. Oh, how often have I seen this verified in the experience of men and women whom God has saved by his almighty grace!

13. *And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgat me, saith the* LORD.

They burnt no incense at Jerusalem; they refused to offer sacrifice there; but they went to this hill and to that, to worship the different images of Baal, and said, "These are our gods." Therefore, God says that he will make them sick of their idolatry. They shall grow tired of thus polluting his holy name, and degrading themselves by worshipping things made of wood and stone.

14. *Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her.*

Oh, glorious verse! She that went so far astray, God will come, and draw her back from the path of sin. He will get her alone; he will bring her into a place of grief and sorrow, a wilderness; and then he will come near, and speak sweet words of comfort into her ear. "I will allure her," as the bird-catchers whistle to the birds, and draw them to the net, so will I allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, the place of loneliness, the place of want; and "I will speak to her heart," so the Hebrew has it, for God knows how to speak, not only into the ear, but into the heart.

15. *And I will give her her vineyards from thence,*

He will give back what he took away. He will seal with lovingkindness the real kindness which made him deal roughly with her at first.

15. *And the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.*

Oh, backslider, God can give you back your early joy, your early love, ay, and your early purity; and he can make you sing as at the beginning! Wherefore, be of good comfort, and come to your Lord; come even now, with all your sins about you, and he will receive you.

16. *And it shall be at that day, saith the* LORD, *that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.*

"Baali" means "my lord" in the sense of domination; but God will not seem to us any more like a domineering governor, as we once thought him; but we shall call him "Ishi", "my husband." There shall be such nearness of love, such confidence of hope, between the restored soul and her God, that she shall call him no more Baali, but Ishi.

17. *For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name.*

Oh, the love of God! He does not want us to recollect our old ways. I do not like to hear people talk about their old habits, except they do it very tenderly, with many a tear and many a sigh, and tell the story to the praise and glory of divine grace. God takes the old names out of our lips; we forget them, we have done with them, we bury the dead past, and we live in newness of life.

18. *And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground:*

So that the insects should not devour the crops, and the foxes should not spoil the vines, and the birds should not steal the seed. So will God take care of his people still. It does seem that, when we once get right with God, we get right with everything; when we are at peace with him, then neither beast, nor fowl, nor creeping thing can do us harm.

18. *And I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.*

They had been much troubled by war. It had killed their children, destroyed their homes, and made them poor and wretched. Now God says, "I will break the bow and the sword and the battle." How often God gives a heavenly calm to us when we are once washed in the blood of Christ, and covered with his righteousness! I remember how the storm within my heart was hushed into a deep calm as soon as I had seen my Lord, and had yielded my heart to him. Oh, you that are in storms to-night, I pray that God may bring you to himself, and give you "peace, perfect peace!" And then what more will the Lord do?

19. *And I will betroth thee unto me for ever;*

What, this woman that had gone so far into evil? Can a man receive such an one back? No; but God can. He says there shall be a new betrothal, a new marriage: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever." Blessed word!

19, 20. *Yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the* LORD.

Thou shalt know Jehovah; thou shalt know that there is none like him, passing by iniquity, transgression, and sin; and faithful to his people even when they are unfaithful to him. Is there any god like our God? Have you ever tasted his grace? Do you know his pardoning love? Have you ever been brought back to him? Have you been restored to his favour? Then I am sure you can say, "There is none like unto Jehovah."

21, 22. *And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the* LORD, *I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.*

God would send rain when it was wanted. He would be all ear to hear on behalf of his people. He would not only hear them, but hear the very earth they tilled, and the heavens above their heads, as if nature itself began to pray when the child of God learned that holy art.

23. *And I will sow her unto me in the earth;*

He would make the people to be like the seed which he himself would sow, and cause to spring up, and abide.

23. *And I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy;*

I would like to read that again. Somebody has, perhaps, come in here to-night, who has never obtained mercy. Perhaps you have been seeking it, and you have not found it. Hear God's promise, and lay hold upon it: "I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy."

23. *And I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.*

See, it is all in "shalls" and "wills." God is speaking, God omnipotent, omnipotent over men's hearts. He is not saying, "I will if they will," but "I will, and they shall," for he hath the key of free agency; and when he turns it in the lock, without violating the free will of man, he makes him willing in the day of his power to the praise of his divine supremacy, for God is God when he saves as much as when he reigns; yea, his reigning grace is the very glory of his nature, and this we love and adore. God grant us a taste of it! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—233, 565, 569.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SAINTS GUARDED FROM STUMBLING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."—Jude 24, 25.

THE point and pith of what I may have to say will lie in the alteration of this text caused by the revision of the New Testament. The Revised Version runs thus, "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling." I am not going to speak at any length upon the rest of the text; but shall dwell mainly upon this remarkable alteration, which certainly gives the meaning of the original better than the rendering in the Authorized Version.

To begin, then, here is a doxology. Jude is writing upon very practical subjects indeed; his short epistle is of the most practical kind; but he cannot finish it without a doxology of praise. Is there any work which we should complete without praise to God? Prayer should always have praise mingled with it. The preaching of the gospel, or the writing of it, the teaching of the young, and every other form of Christian service, should be combined with the spirit of praise. I think that I may say of praise what we read of salt in the Old Testament, "salt without prescribing how much." You cannot have too much of praise. "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," and "with all thine offerings thou shalt offer praise." It seems delightful to me to notice how the apostle Paul stops almost in the midst of a sentence to bow his knees, and utter a doxology of praise to his God. And here Jude, with burning words denouncing sin, and urging believers to purity, cannot conclude his epistle without saying, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Beloved friends, we may well continue to praise God, for our God continues to give us causes for praise. If we will only think, we shall begin to thank. If we will only consider even the mercies of the present, we shall break out with ascriptions of praise to him. At this very moment, every believer here has a reason for a doxology.

My text begins with "Now", and closes with "now and ever." The praise of God should be given at the present time; and it is to be perpetually carried on, therefore now is the time for it to be rendered: "both now and ever. Amen."

Consider, then, dear brother or sister, thou hast at this moment a cause for ascribing praise to God, and thou hast this reason for it, at any rate, that he is able to guard thee from stumbling; his ability is to be employed for thy good; his power is intended for thy keeping. Oh, sing unto the Lord a new song to-night, with heart and soul bless him, who is able to guard thee from stumbling, and to present thee faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy!

I. Coming to the text at once, I shall notice, first, THE DANGER TO BE DREADED. It is "stumbling." What is that?

Well, first of all, it is *a lesser form of falling*. A horse may stumble and not fall; yet it is a sort of falling. If there is much stumbling, it will be a fall. Now, there are faults, to which the child of God is very liable, which do not amount to actual falling; but they are stumblings. Like David, we have to say, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped." We are not actually down; it is a wonder that we are not. We have not broken our knees; but we were within an inch of doing so; a little more, and we should have fallen to our serious hurt. The text speaks of "Him that is able to guard you from stumbling," to preserve you from the smallest form of grieving the Spirit, or the faintest trace of sin, which would not amount to a fall. The Lord can keep you from that which is not a fall, but which might lead to it. I want to set a high standard before you to-night. Jude does not say that you are able to guard yourselves from stumbling, for you are not; but the ascription of praise is to him who is able to guard you even from stumbling, and to present you, not only pardoned, but faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

Stumbling is, next, not only a form of falling, and a matter therefore to be grieved over, but it is *a prelude to falling*. Oftentimes, we first stumble, and then, after a while, down we go. If we could recover ourselves from the stumble, we should not have to gather ourselves up from the fall. Long before the child of God falls into public sin, and injures his character, those who watch him will have perceived his stumbling. He kept up, just kept up; but you wondered that he did. He kept on, perhaps for months; but as you looked at him, you said to yourself, "I am afraid that he will come to something worse. I feel sure that he will have a stumble, and another stumble, and then another stumble, and he will be down by-and-by." Oh, that a child of God could notice his own stumblings, then he would soon be delivered from them! But it is too often with us, to change the metaphor, as Hosea says, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." He is getting feeble, he is becoming prematurely old; but he has not seen the change in the colour of his hair. He has not looked in the glass of the Word lately, so he is unconscious that he is declining. If Satan cannot conquer Mansoul by storming it, he sometimes triumphs by sapping and mining, gradually undermining the walls, and getting a secret entrance in that way. May

the Lord make us very watchful, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, and may our Saviour guard us even from stumbling, for then we shall be kept from falling!

I think that I can put this matter pretty plainly. You must have known, you must have read of, or you must have seen, some people, whom you believe to be true and real Christians; and in their lives there is nothing glaringly wrong, nothing that is so offensive that they can be excluded from the church, or for which their Christian friends would condemn them as hypocrites; yet, somehow, their lives are, to say the least, questionable, doubtful. There is good in them; but that good is blotted. We trust that there is in them a true desire to be right; but there are so many sad failures in their lives that they seem to stumble to heaven rather than to run there. Now, our desire is that our life may not be of that kind; and therefore we would lay hold upon this text, and plead it before the throne, "Lord, thou art able to guard us from stumbling, be pleased to do so, to the praise of the glory of thy grace!"

You will see that stumbling is *itself a form of evil*, if you think of another phase of it. There were some who stumbled at the doctrine of Christ in his own day. He had a number of followers who kept with him up to a certain point; but when the Saviour said, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," they went back, and walked no more with him. They could not understand what he meant, and they murmured, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" So, being staggered and stumbled at the depth of this great mystery, they turned aside, and walked no more with him. Beloved, we want God so to uphold us and guard us that, whatever the teaching of his Holy Word may be, we shall receive it without a demur. I know that there are some Christian people who stumble at one doctrine, especially if they hear somebody denounce it; and there are others who are staggered at another doctrine, because they have met some very wise man, who knows better than the Word of God, and says that it cannot be true. In these days, there is very great liability to this kind of stumbling, especially among Christians who do not read their Bibles much; and I am sorry to say that there are plenty of such Christians. They read magazines, or perhaps works of fiction, rather than the sure Word of God; and they are thus easily caught in the snare of the fowler. Many professing Christians do not know what God's Word really teaches, so they are not established in the faith; they do not know even the elements of the doctrines of Christ, they have not examined the immutable foundations of the faith, and they are staggered. And truly, the mysteries of the kingdom are so deep, and the teachings of Christ are so contrary to the reasonings of flesh and blood, that we need not wonder if some are stumbled. Let us cry to him who is able to guard us from stumbling that, with steady step, we may press on in the way of life, and never be ashamed of truth, lest truth should be ashamed of us. Let us believe what the Bible says, however difficult the believing may be, because God has said it. This should ever stand for us as the grand master-argument, not the reasonableness of the doctrine, not because it commends itself to our judgment,

but the fact that God hath said it; that ends all debate. Christ is able to guard from stumbling as to doctrine.

Many others are stumbled at the cross. Strange to say, the cross of Christ has always been the stumbling-stone to the ungodly, and to mere professors. What! the cross of Christ an occasion of stumbling? Why, it is the very centre of apostolic teaching: "We preach Christ crucified." Nowadays, there are two great points of attack; the one is the inspiration of Scripture, and the other is the substitutionary work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The enemies of the cross will not have a crucified Saviour; they stumble at that which is the very foundation of our faith. The Lord will keep us from stumbling at Christ's cross, I am quite sure. It is the rock of our refuge, the pillar of our hope.

The cross that Christ carried involves one for us to carry. No sooner does a Christian man become a believer, and confess Christ in baptism, than he is sure to meet with some who straightway revile him. He has to take up his cross. A working-man among sceptical companions, a young girl in a book-folding warehouse, a wife who has an ungodly husband, as soon as they come out boldly on the side of Christ, straightway they have a cross to carry; and this causes a great many to stumble. Persecution and ridicule are too much for them; by-and-by they are offended, that is, they stumble at the cross. They would have Christ, but not any shame for Christ's sake; they are like Mr. Pliable, who set out to go to the Celestial City, but when he tumbled into the Slough of Despond with Christian, he said that, if he could only get out on the side nearest to his own house, Christian might have the Celestial City all to himself, for he could not go through a slough to get there. How many there are of this kind, fearful ones; cowardly ones! But there is a God who is able to guard us from stumbling, and I trust that he will do so. May we never be stumbled by anything that happens to us for Christ's sake! May we take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, if need be; yea, and suffer death itself, if it should ever come to that, sooner than turn aside from bearing the cross after the crucified Christ!

And this stumbling sometimes happens, not only at the doctrine of Christ, and at his cross, but at the precepts he has given. If we are to be Christ's, we must obey him. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." But one will stagger at one command of Christ, and another at another. Though Christ bids us love one another, there are some who can do anything but love. They can give their bodies to be burned, but they have no charity. When Christ bids us walk in integrity before all mankind, there are some who can do many good things, but they like little sly practices in trade, and they stumble at Christ because of those evil ways. You know there are many ways in which people try to be as little Christians as they can be, so as just to get into heaven. Miserable wretches, they want to save their souls, and yet after all to follow the ways of the world. So they stumble at the precepts of the Holy Christ. They cannot put up with commands like his, which lay the axe at the root of the tree. If you are kept by him who is able to guard you from stumbling, you will love every way of Christ, and every word of Christ, and your

prayer will be, "Teach me thy statutes," and your heart will willingly obey every precept of the Lord.

Once more, there are some who are staggered by the experience of believers. I speak now especially to young beginners. You have begun to be believers in Christ, and you have been very, very happy. I am very glad that you are. Long may your happiness continue! But there is another who has been, perhaps, in the way of the Lord for a few months; and suddenly a depression of spirit has come over him, and he says to himself, "Oh, dear me, is this the way of God's people?" I remember that, within a week after I had found joy and peace in believing, I began to feel the uprisings of inbred sin, and I cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" I did not know that such a sigh and cry never could come out of an unbelieving heart, that there must be a new heart and a right spirit within the man to whom sin is a burden, and who loathes it. I did not know that then; and I wondered whether I could be a child of God at all. Oh, there are strange experiences for those who are on the road to heaven! You remember how John Newton sings—

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith, and love, and every grace·
Might more of his salvation know,
And seek more earnestly his face.

"I hoped that in some favoured hour
At once he'd answer my request,
And by his love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins, and give me rest.

"Instead of this he made me feel
The hidden evils of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell
Assault my soul in every part."

The good man began to discover more and more his own sinfulness, and he said, "Lord, is this the way to holiness?" and he was stumbled for a moment. O beloved, it is only the grace of God that can make us feel that, whatever experiences we have within us, our faith looks to a living Christ, who never changes, and we rest in his finished work. Whether we are up or whether we are down, whether we sing or whether we sigh, we look beyond our changing moods unto him who loved us, and gave himself for us. Yet many have been stumbled by their own inner experiences, not understanding them. There is only One who can guard us from such stumblings.

So, then, dear friends, to close this description of stumbling, if we are guarded from stumbling we shall certainly be kept from falling. *This is an inclusive blessing.* It includes preservation from all falling into outward sin; and especially all final falling, all fatal falling. Christ is able to guard us from stumbling; much more is he able to preserve us from falling away, from utterly departing from the faith. But we should do that if it were not for his guardian care. There is nothing that the worst of men have done which the best of men could not do if they were left by the grace of God. Do not think so much of yourself as to imagine yourself incapable of even the greatest crime.

That very thought proves that you are capable of committing any crime. I think that it is Mr. Cecil who says, "I thought myself humble, one day, when I said that I did wonder that I should have sinned as I had done in such a way; whereas," said he, "if I had been truly humble, I should not have wondered that I sinned like that; I should have wondered at the grace of God that kept me from even greater sin; and I should have understood that my natural tendencies all went towards evil, and that the marvel was that they did not master me, and lead me farther into evil than I had gone." Oh, beloved, we must be kept by God himself, or else stumbling, falling, foully and fatally falling, will be our lot! From that, however, the Lord will preserve us who are truly his.

So much, then, upon the danger to be dreaded.

II. Now, I must be somewhat more brief on the second point, THE PRIVILEGE TO BE ENJOYED: "Now unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling."

Well, beloved friends, it is a great privilege to be guarded from stumbling, for *it is a privilege that we greatly need.* I was thinking of the many things that make us in danger of stumbling. There is, first, our weakness. It is the weak horse, you know, that stumbles and falls. It is out of condition, out of health, and down it goes. And we are weak, very weak. Then, consider the many roads that we have to travel. Here is a man who is a preacher, a husband, a father, a master. Some of you are tradesmen, or workmen; and beside your daily occupation, you have all your domestic relationships on you. Now, what you need is to be guarded all round from stumbling. We have heard of one who was all right at home, but he was very queer outside his house. I have heard of another who was an excellent man in the church; but if you had asked his wife about him, she would not have liked to describe him. A man may be a very good man at a prayer-meeting; but he may be a very poor hand when you get him at his work. I have known some move very slowly indeed at that time; nobody would have liked to pay them by the day. Now, it is an evil thing when a Christian is bad anywhere; but it is a grand thing, and only God can enable us to attain to it, when we do not stumble in any one of the ways which we have to go, but are kept walking uprightly always.

And then, you know, it is the pace that makes some people stumble. See the pace we have to go at now. When I think of our dear old fathers in the country, I almost envy their quiet lives; not up too early, and seldom going to bed very late, not much to do, leading very steady sort of lives. They travelled by broad-wheeled waggons, and we fly over the ground by express trains, and want to go twice as quickly as we can, and all the while we have so much to do.

And, then, it is not only the pace, dear friends, but it is the loads that some of you have to carry. Oh, the weights that are piled upon some of God's people in their business! Only God can keep an overloaded heart from stumbling; and the ways are very rough just now. You hardly meet anybody in trade who does not say, "Ah, we have a rough bit of ground to travel over now; stone in plenty, and no steam roller!" But there is One who is able to keep you from falling.

Perhaps there are some of you who have not to travel over a rough bit of road; your path is very smooth; you have all that heart can wish for, and every comfort that you could desire. You want to be guarded from stumbling, for you are on a very slippery road. If there has been a thaw, and then a frost comes on at night, the road may be very pretty to look at, but it is very bad for a horse's feet; and so prosperity is a very slippery way for God's people. The Lord must keep them from falling, or they will go down with a crash.

Then there is the length of the road as well as the other things I have mentioned. If we had to serve God only for a short time, one might easily do it; but we may have to go on for fifty years, sixty years, seventy years, eighty years. I think, sometimes, that if martyr days were to come, and they would burn me quickly, I could endure it; but it would be a terrible trial to be roasted at a slow fire; yet our lives are often so prolonged, and filled with trial and temptation, that it is like being roasted alive by a slow fire. The road is long, and the pace has become very trying, so we may easily stumble; but the text gives us good cheer, for it tells us of him that is able to guard us from stumbling.

It is not only needful for us to be kept, but *it is very gracious on Christ's part to keep us.* Beloved, what if you should have this text fulfilled in you, so that, through a long and trying life, you should so live that, when your enemies wanted to find fault with you, they would not know where to begin? Live so that if they look you up and down, they will have to say of you as they said of Daniel, "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God." Oh, if you should go down to the grave faultless,—not that we can any of us be in ourselves faultless in the sight of God,—but if you live such blameless lives that no one shall be able to say evil of you, but shall be compelled to confess that in you the life of Christ has been reflected in your measure, what a privilege it will be! And this is the privilege set before you in the text, that you shall not be stumbled.

What distress you will be saved from if you are guarded from stumbling! A stumbling Christian has to be a sorrowing Christian. When a child of God stumbles, and knows it, he very soon takes to weeping, and humbling himself in the presence of his God. But if you are kept by the grace of God, you will be saved from many a bitter pang, and helped to go from joy to joy, and grace to grace.

What a blessing such a person is to other people in the Church of God! Without saying anything against our fellow-Christians, we know where our respect and confidence usually go. When we have seen brothers and sisters, who have been upheld and sustained in trial and temptation, and have not stumbled, we take delight in them. Those of us who are younger and weaker, go and hide, as it were, under the shadow of their wing.

And what a blessing such people are to the world! Those are the true saints who help to spread the gospel of Christ. A holy life is a missionary enterprise. An unstumbling life is an incentive to others to run along the heavenly road, trusting in the divine power to guard them also from stumbling.

Best of all that I have to say is this, that *this privilege is attainable:* "Unto him that is *able* to guard you from stumbling." "Oh!" says one, "if I just get to heaven, it will satisfy me." Will it? I pray you, do not talk so. Just to get in, like a tempest-tossed barque, water-logged, or like a wreck just towed into the harbour at last,—well, it is a great mercy to get to heaven anyhow; but that is a poor way of getting in. Better would it be to steam into the harbour, with a full cargo, and plenty of passengers on board, and all the flags flying to the honour of the Great King and Pilot, who has guarded you through the storm, that "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." May it be so with you! Oh, that we may not have to send off the tugs, and tow you into the harbour; but that instead thereof, you may come in, with a fleet of little ships behind you, able to say, "Here am I, and the children that thou hast given me"! This is a privilege worth having, and it cannot be attained except through him who is able to guard you from stumbling.

III. Now I will lead you on, in the third place, with great brevity, to remember THE POWER WHICH BESTOWS THIS PRIVILEGE.

To be guarded from stumbling throughout a long life, is *not of ourselves*. It is not to be found in our own experience; not even in the means of grace alone. That same power that made the heavens and the earth, and keeps the earth and heavens in their places, is needed to make a Christian, and to keep him standing before the sons of men.

"Unto him that is able to guard you from stumbling." God has this power. *He has power over all circumstances.* He can so arrange the trials of your life that you shall never be tempted beyond what you are able to bear; he has power also over Satan, so that, when he desires to have you to sift you as wheat, the Lord can keep him back. God will not allow him to overcome you.

Best of all, *God has power over our hearts.* He can keep us alive with holy zeal; he can keep us so believing, so loving, so hoping, so watching, so fully obedient, that we shall not stumble at his Word, or stumble at anything else.

Jude speaks of "the only wise God", so that, *God's power is joined with wisdom.* He knows your weakness, and he can guard you against it. He knows your tempters, and he can thrust them aside, or help you to overcome them. It is the wise God, as well as the strong God, who is able to guard you from stumbling, He knows where the stumbling-stones are, and where your weakness is; and he can and he will bring you safely through.

Yet once more, the One who guards us from stumbling is *our Saviour* as well as the only wise God. It is his business to save you. It is his office to save you, and save you he will. Commit yourself to-night to his guardian care, and walk with him. That is a high favour, that you may not only be kept from falling, but even be guarded from stumbling, to the praise and glory of his grace.

I have been very brief where I should have liked to enlarge.

IV. I finish with this point, THE GLORY WHICH IS DUE TO CHRIST FOR THIS PRIVILEGE. If we are guarded from stumbling, we may

take no credit to ourselves; but we must lay the crown at the feet of him to whom the power belongs.

If he has kept us from stumbling until now, *let us praise him for the past.* Oh, what a mercy to have had this keeping year after year! Notwithstanding many imperfections and follies, which we have had to confess, yet we have been kept from any grievous stumbling that would have dishonoured the holy name of Christ. Bless God to-night that you have been kept from stumbling to-day. I do not know where you have been; but I have no doubt you have been where you might have slipped if you had been left by the Spirit of God. You have been in the shop; you have been in the home; you have been in the street; you have been on the Exchange; you have been among ungodly men. Ay, and even among Christian men, you can soon commit yourself, and trip up. If you have been kept to-day, do not say, "How good I am!" No, no, no; say, "Now unto him who has guarded me from stumbling, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

Now, will you *begin to praise him for the future as well?* You have not experienced it yet; but remember that verse which we often sing,—

> "And a new song is in my mouth,
> To long-loved music set;
> Glory to thee for all the grace
> I have not tasted yet."

Begin to thank the Lord that he will keep you from falling in the future. Bless him that he will present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

And the next time that danger comes to you, *praise him that he can guard you from stumbling.* To-morrow morning, perhaps, you have a difficult task before you. You are looking forward, in the course of the week, to something that will be very trying. Well, praise God now, that he is able to guard you from stumbling. But oh, what a song we will give him when we are once over the river! When we climb the celestial hills, when we enter heaven, and find ourselves among the white-robed, blood-washed throng, I wonder which of us will praise him most. Well, let us not wait till then; but let us begin here; let us rehearse the music of the spheres now. Let us say, "Now unto him that is able to guard us from stumbling, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

This sermon does not belong to all of you, I am sorry to say. I wish that it did; but remember, dear hearer, that he who can keep the saint from stumbling, can bring the sinner into the right way. The same grace that can preserve the child of God from falling into sin can bring you out of sin; and as we have to look wholly to Christ, certainly you must do so. May the Lord lead you to look to-night out of yourself, and your feelings, and your doings, and trust to the Lord Jesus, who died, but lives again, and lives to save guilty men! Whosoever believeth in him hath everlasting life; and he will bring them into his way, and keep them from stumbling, and present them among the rest of his blood-washed, to praise his name for ever. The Lord bless this meditation, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM XCI.

Verse 1.—*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.*

It is not every man who dwells there; no, not even every Christian man. There are some who come to God's house; but the man mentioned here dwells with the God of the house. There are some who worship in the outer court of the temple; but "he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High" lives in the Holy of Holies; he draws near to the mercy-seat, and keeps there; he walks in the light, as God is in the light; he is not one who is sometimes on and sometimes off, a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home, he dwells in the secret place of the most High. Oh, labour to get to that blessed position! You who know the Lord, pray that you may attain to this high condition of dwelling in the inner shrine, always near to God, always overshadowed by those cherubic wings which indicate the presence of God. If this is your position, you "shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." You are not safe in the outer courts; you are not protected from all danger anywhere but within the veil. Let us come boldly there; and, when we once enter, let us dwell there.

2. *I will say of the* LORD, *He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.*

This is a daring utterance, as if the psalmist would claim for himself the choicest privileges of any child of God. When you hear a glorious doctrine preached, it may be very sweet to others; but the honey lies in the particular application of it to yourself. You must, like the bee, go down into the bell of the flower yourself, and fetch out its nectar. "I will say of the Lord, He is my"—then come three my's, as if the psalmist could grasp the Triune Jehovah,—"my refuge, my fortress, my God; in him will I trust." What a grand word that is, "My God"! Can any language be loftier? Can any thought be more profound? Can any comfort be surer?

3. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,*

If you dwell near to God, you will not be deceived by Satan. In the light of the Lord you will see light; and you will discover the limed twigs and the nets and the traps that are set to catch you: "He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler."

3. *And from the noisome pestilence.*

The pestilence is something that you cannot see. It comes creeping in, and fills the air with death before you perceive its approach; but "He shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence." There is a pestilence of dangerous and accursed error abroad at this time; but if we dwell in the secret place of the most High, it cannot affect us; we shall be beyond its power. "Surely," oh, blessed word! there is no doubt about this great truth, "Surely, he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence."

4. *He shall cover thee with his feathers,*

The psalmist uses a wonderful metaphor when he ascribes "feathers" to God, and compares him to a hen, or some mother-bird, under whose wings her young find shelter. Yet the condescension of God is such that he allows us to speak of him thus: "He shall cover thee with his feathers."

4. *And under his wings shalt thou trust:*

God is to his people a strong defence and a tender defence. "His wings" and "his feathers" suggest both power and softness. God hides not his people in a casing of iron; their shelter is stronger than iron, yet it is soft as the

downy wings of a bird for ease and comfort. As the little chicks bury their tiny heads in the feathers of the hen, and seem happy, and warm, and comfortable under their mother's wings, so shall it be with thee if thou dwellest with thy God: "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

4. *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.*

Twice is he armed who hath God's truth to be his shield and buckler.

5. *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night;*

Nervous as you are, and naturally timid, when you dwell near to God, your fears shall all go to sleep. That is a wonderful promise: "Thou shalt not be afraid." If it had said, "Thou shalt have no cause for fear," it would have been a very comforting word; but this is even more cheering, "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night."

5. *Nor for the arrow that flieth by day;*

Both night and day thou shalt be safe. Thy God will not leave thee in the glare of the sun, nor will he forsake thee when the damps of night-dews would put thee in peril. We, dear friends, may have secret enemies, who shoot at us, but we shall not be afraid of the arrow. There may be unseen influences that would ruin us, or cause us dishonour, or distress; but when we dwell with God, we shall not be afraid of them.

6, 7. *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.*

When God takes his people to dwell in nearness to himself, and they have faith in this promise, I make no doubt that, literally, in the time of actual pestilence, they will be preserved. It is not every professing Christian, nor every believer who attains this height of experience; but only such as believe the promise, and fulfil the heavenly condition of dwelling in the secret place of the most High. How could cholera or fever get into the secret place of the most High? How could any arrows, how could any pestilence, ever be able to reach that secure abode of God? If you dwell there, you are invincible, invulnerable, infinitely secure.

8—10. *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the* LORD, *which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee,*

"There shall no evil befall thee." It may have the appearance of evil; but it shall turn out to thy good. There shall be but the appearance of evil, not the reality of it: "There shall no evil befall thee."

10, 11. *Neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.*

You remember how the devil misapplied this text to Christ. He was quite right in the application; but he was quite wrong in the quotation, for he left out the words "in all thy ways." God will help us in our ways if we keep in his ways. When we meet with trouble and accident, we ought to enquire whether we are in God's way. That famous old Puritan, holy Mr. Dodd, having to cross a river, had to change from one boat into another, and being little used to the water, he fell in, and, when he was pulled out, in his simplicity and wisdom he said, "I hope that I am in my way." That was the only question that seemed to trouble him. If I am in my way, then God will keep me. We ought to ask ourselves, "Now, am I in God's way? Am I really moving to-day and acting to-day as divine providence leads me, and as duty calls me?" He who travels on the king's business, by daylight, along the king's highway, may be sure of the king's protection. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

Come here, Gabriel, Michael, and all the rest of you," says the great King of kings to the angels around his throne; and when they come at his call, he says, "Take care of my child. Watch over him to-day. He will be in peril; suffer no evil to come near him."

12. *They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

What royal protection we have, a guard of angels, who count it their delight and their honour to wait upon the seed-royal of the universe, for such are all the saints of God!

13. *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.*

Strength and mastery may be united: "The young lion and the dragon": but the child of God shall overcome them. Talk of St. George and the dragon! We ought to think more of the saint and the dragon. It is he that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, who, by God's help, treads upon the lion and adder, and of whom it is written, "The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet."

14. *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him:*

Does God take notice of our poor love? Oh, yes, he values the love of his people, for he knows where it came from; it is a part of his own love; the creation of his grace!

14. *I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.*

Does God value such feeble and imperfect knowledge of his name as we possess? Yes; and he rewards that knowledge: "I will set him on high."

15. *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him:*

Notice, that it is, "He shall," and "I will." The mighty grace of God "shall" make us pray, and the Almighty God of grace "will" answer our prayer: "He shall call upon me, and I will answer him." How I love these glorious shalls and wills!

15. *I will be with him in trouble;*

"Whatever that trouble is, I will be with him in it. If he be dishonoured, if he be in poverty, if he be in sickness, if that sickness should drive his best friend away from his bed, still, 'I will be with him in trouble.'"

15. *I will deliver him, and honour him.*

God puts honour upon us, poor dishonourable worms that we are. One old divine calls a man "a worm six feet long"; and it is rather a flattering description of him. But God says, "I will deliver him, and honour him."

16. *With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation.*

He will live as long as he wants to live. Even if he should have but few years, yet he shall have a long life; for life is to be measured by the life that is in it, not by the length along which it drags. Still, God's children do live to a far longer age than any other people in the world; they are on the whole a long-lived race. They who fear God are delivered from the vices which would deprive them of the vigour of life; and the joy and contentment they have in God help them to live longer than others. I have often noticed how long God's people live. Some of them are speedily taken home; still this text is, as a rule, literally fulfilled, "With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." He shall see God's salvation even here; and when he dies, and wakes up in the likeness of his Lord, he will see it to the full. May that be the portion of each of us! Amen.

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SEALED AND OPEN EVIDENCES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, FEBRUARY 26TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days."—Jeremiah xxxii. 14.

THE discourse of this evening is suggested by the transaction of Jeremiah with his uncle's son, in the purchase of a field at Anathoth, which he conducted in a business-like and legal way. I will begin with just a few remarks upon the transaction itself.

Jeremiah was called to forego the comforts of the present for the blessings of the future. He was a poor man, and he was shut up in prison. A little money must have been a very great thing to him at such a time; even food could not be purchased during the siege except at fabulous prices, and his allowance was very small. Yet he paid down seventeen shekels of silver,—not a great sum in itself, but very great to him in such circumstances,—to buy the field which, as I said in the exposition, he could not go and see, for he was a prisoner, and which he could not have reached even if he had been free, for it was in the hand of the Chaldeans, and laid desolate by the invading army. He was commanded by the Lord to buy a field which, speaking after the manner of men, was in the moon. It was what we call "an estate in Spain", which Jeremiah could not possibly visit; but because he had God's orders to buy it, he did buy it, and he paid the purchase-money right cheerfully.

Dear brethren, this is exactly what we have to do, we have to pawn the present for the future. We must be satisfied to give up anything which Christ may require of us for the sake of that which is yet to come. Our inheritance is not on this side of Jordan. Our joy is yet to be revealed. I grant you that we have much thrown in, for the Lord is a good paymaster; but on the road to heaven he gives us only our spending money. Our inheritance is in the land of the hereafter, in the regions of the blessed; and we must not look for it

here; this is not our rest. It is worth while to give up a great deal that belongs to the present for the eternal inheritance which is yet to be ours. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God;" and if ever it should come to this, that your present comfort, ay, and your present life, must be given up for the sake of the land of promise and the covenant heritage, make no demur. Do not hesitate for a moment, but yield everything up, that the greater blessings of the future may be assuredly yours.

My second remark is that, when a man acts by faith, he ought still to act in a clear, business-like way. We who believe in God are no fools. Some may think that we are; but they would not find us to be so if they had to deal with us in matters requiring judgment and consideration. Jeremiah buys the field in the presence of witnesses, weighs the money, and has the title-deed drawn up, and the counterpart of the deed, all after a legal manner, just as Abraham did when he bought the field of Machpelah of the sons of Heth. That passage in Genesis is an ancient legal document, containing just such words as you would find in an Oriental purchase-deed of the present day. The man of God counts that things, which to others are dreams, are to him realities, and he treats them as such. Faith is sanctified common-sense. It believes in God: is that stupidity? It believes in God's promise: is that foolishness? It believes that God will keep his word: is that a folly? If so, we purpose to be more foolish still; but knowing that it is not folly, but truest wisdom, we act in this case as we act in other matters, and we make sure as far as we can. "Fast bind, fast find," says our proverb; and therefore we exercise in the things of God that discretion and prudence which we use in the things of men. Faith is not folly; and the believer must not in anything act like a fool.

Perhaps you might wonder why Jeremiah, whose business it was to prophesy, should be set to buy land? There is nothing like division of labour. Let the politician attend to politics, let the keeper of a theatre supply amusement to the people who want it, and let the Christian minister keep to his preaching. Yes, but Jeremiah was commanded by God to do this because he was really preaching by what he did. The preacher must believe in what he preaches; and it may be that he will be called to do something which will be to his people the best possible proof that he really does believe it. Jeremiah believes that the city, though it was to be destroyed, would afterwards be rebuilt, and that land would be valuable, trade would be restored, and agriculture would again flourish. He has said this; he has now to prove it. The few shekels that he has, he must invest in a bit of land which is worth nothing to-day, but may be worth a good deal, if not to himself, yet to his heirs. He must buy the field to prove his sincerity. Oh, beloved, if we are called to preach, we must believe what we preach, or else we had better give it up! "I believed, therefore have I spoken," is a text which should be written over every minister's study door, and over his pulpit, too. What have we to say if we have a doubt about it? How can we move others if we have no fulcrum for our lever, if we are not ourselves sure and certain? If there is no element of dogmatism in our message because of our

confidence concerning what we have to deliver, in God's name let us go to bed, and hold our tongues until we do believe it. The monk that shook the world owed his power, under God, to the fact that the world could not shake him. Martin Luther believed with an unshaken faith, and therefore he had power over others. God called Jeremiah to effect the purchase of this little estate to prove to the people that he believed what he preached.

And now, leaving Jeremiah, I am going to make a parable, not to bring out what the text teaches, but to use it parable-wise. When he bought this piece of land, it was transferred to him by two documents. The first was a title-deed, drawn up and signed by witnesses, and then sealed up, not to be opened any more unless required to settle a dispute. That was his real title-deed. Then there was a counterpart of this transfer made, and signed by witnesses. This was not rolled up, and it was not sealed; but it was left open, so that Jeremiah might refer to it, and that, when desired, the open deed might be read and examined by others. It is not at all a bad custom, and one which we, to a large extent, follow, that there should be two deeds of transfer, the one to be kept and laid up by itself, only to be opened in case of litigation, or absolute necessity; the other being the certified copy, the open evidence for daily use if anybody wished to examine it, and see how the property had been transferred.

Now, with regard to our redemption, our inheritance which Christ has bought for us at a price immense, we, too, have two sets of evidences. The one is sealed up from all eyes but our own; in part, too, I might say that it is sealed up from our own eyes. The other, the counterpart of that, equally valid, is open to ourselves and open to others. So I shall talk, first, about *the sealed evidences of our faith;* and, secondly, about *the open evidences of our faith;* and, thirdly, about *the use of these two sets of evidences.* May the Holy Spirit make us wise to speak things to edification and to heart-searching, as he alone can!

I. First, then, I want you to think a little of THE SEALED EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH, the evidences which are sealed, at least in a measure, from our fellow-men.

And, first, I would say, among the sealed evidences is this: *the Word of the Lord has come to us with power.* If anyone asked himself, "Have I a right to the covenant of grace, and to the 'all things' which are ours if we are in that covenant? Have I a right to the purchased possession? Have I a right to the Lord Jesus Christ, and all that comes to believers in him?"—in part, the answer must be, "Has the Word of the Lord come to you with power, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the Word of God?" Some of my hearers will not understand what I am now saying. I noticed, in one of the daily papers, this remark about a sermon I preached a few Sunday mornings ago, "Mr. Spurgeon will admit that it wanted an education to understand him." Yes, I do admit that; and I admit another thing, namely, that very many newspaper writers have not that education, and that therefore they cannot understand what we preach. It is with our preaching of such things as it was with Dr. Hawker, when preaching at Plymouth. One of his members brought down from London a great scientist, and he thought that the learned

man would like to hear Dr. Hawker, the eminent preacher of the gospel. The next morning, this member said to the doctor, "I brought So-and-So to hear you yesterday." "Did you?" "Yes; and what do you think he said, Dr. Hawker? He said that he did not understand a sentence of what you were talking about." "Did he?" said Dr. Hawker, "Well, there were lots of old women in the aisles who understood it all." They had been taught of God, and the other person had not. Now, only he who has felt it will know what I mean by this expression, the Word of God has come with power to our soul. There is a mystic influence, a divine unction, which really goes with the Word of God, in many cases, so that it enters the heart, sheds a radiance upon the understanding, pours a flood of delightful peace and joy upon the soul, and affects the whole mental and spiritual being in a way which nothing else does. You cannot explain this to others; do you know it yourself? If so, that will be to you the sealed evidence that the eternal heritage is yours. The Lord has given you the spiritual perception of these things. You had no such faculty till he gave it to you; but he took you from being carnal, in which state you could not understand spiritual things, and he made you spiritual; and now his spiritual truth has come with the demonstration of the Spirit to your own heart; and you now know, by a witness which you cannot communicate to anybody but yourself, that these things are so, and that you have a part and lot in them.

The next one of these sealed evidences is this, if indeed this heavenly heritage is ours, *we have a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Unless fearfully deceived, some of us can say to-night that we are resting wholly upon Christ. We depend upon the blood of Christ for cleansing, the righteousness of Christ for clothing, the death of Christ to be the death of sin, and the life of Christ to be our life unto God. All that we have we derive from him. As for myself, I have not a shadow of a shade of the ghost of a hope apart from the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ; and I know that many of you can say the same. Well now, the possession of that confidence, that childlike trust, that real faith, is an evidence to you that the heritage is yours. "Without faith, it is impossible to please God," but he that believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. He that accepts Christ and his great sacrifice to be the one ground of his trust, and does this with all his heart and soul, has that sealed evidence which others cannot read, but which he may read with confidence, for Christ said, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." "He that believeth on him is not condemned." He is a justified man; and "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

I can give you only just a hint or two upon these evidences. Another sealed evidence of our interest in Christ is that *we have life in Jesus.* Of this nobody but yourself can judge; and you must be sure to judge very carefully according to the Word of God. It is not the old life educated; it is not the old nature improved; it is a distinctly new life, so that you have hopes to which you once were strangers;

you have fears which once never affected you. You have come into a new world; you are indeed born again. All around you seems new; it is with you as with one I spoke to the other day. She said to me, "Sir, either I am new, or else all the world is." And I said, "Yes, but the world is not new; that remains old." "Oh, but!" she replied, "my relation to it, my thoughts about it, my thoughts about everything are totally different from what they ever were before." You can tell if this change has been wrought in you. If a horse could suddenly be inspired with mental faculty so as to be able to understand astronomy, what a new life it would be for it as it began to study the stars! Ah, but yours is a greater change than that! You have risen from the lower sphere of mere soulish life into the higher condition of spiritual life, and now you consort with God, you speak with Christ, you have become familiar with heavenly things, and are raised up to sit in the heavenlies with Christ Jesus. It is a new life altogether with you, and you feel it beating within your soul. You cannot tell this to everybody. If you did, perhaps you would have your testimony received with a laugh. To yourself, however, it is a sealed evidence, but a very sure one.

And this leads me to the fourth evidence, which is that now *we have communion with God in prayer*. Worldlings may pray after a sort; that is, they can utter a few good words, or repeat a form of prayer; but true believers speak with God as a man speaketh with his friend. We tell him our daily troubles; we detail our wants, we express our joys. Prayer is to us a reality; and God hears it, and he answers us, and gives us many evidences of his love in the answers to our prayers. Some of these we can tell to the praise of his glory; but there are ten times as many which we would not tell for all the world, for they are like love-passages between two enamoured souls, they are too precious to be whispered to other ears. It would be casting pearls before swine if the spiritual man, who dwells with God apart, were to tell all that he asks of God, and all the Lord's answers to his prayers. But, oh! believe me, you cannot enjoy real fellowship with God in prayer, and come out of the closet with Luther's "*Vici! Vici!*" "I have conquered! I have conquered!" on your lip, and live to enjoy the fruits of your victory in wrestling with God in secret, and then have any doubt whether you have a right and title to the eternal heritage. That is a sealed evidence; but it is a sure one. You cannot but look back upon it with extreme satisfaction. The prophet Micah said, "My God will hear me," and if you can truly, from your soul, say the same, you have a blessed evidence that you are an heir of heaven.

But, next, I rank very highly among the sealed evidences of our inheritance the fact that *we have the fear of God before our eyes*. Fear looks like one of the minor graces; but it is a very leading one in the spiritual life. That holy awe of God, that consciousness of his majestic presence, that dread of doing anything contrary to his will, that tender, loving, filial fear, which love does not cast out, but rather nourishes and cherishes, he that has this holy fear is a child of God. They sometimes speak in indictments against criminals of their "not having the fear of God before their eyes"; and, mark you, if a man has not the fear of God before his eyes, you need not wonder at

anything that he does. Take away the fear of God from a nation, and to what lengths of evil will it not go? Remember the great and terrible Revolution in France, when, at the end of the last century, she had cast off all fear of God. When a nation comes to that point, rebellion against authority is the least thing to be looked for. The horrors of the guillotine and the constant flow of blood will be sure to come; but in the child of God there is a holy, filial fear, which keeps him from doing things that others do. Remember how Nehemiah says, "So did not I, because of the fear of God." A Christian is not held back from a certain course by a dread of punishment, but by that loving dread of offending so good and so gracious a God as he has. Now, if you feel to-night that you can honestly say that you walk in the fear of God all the day long, that is a sealed evidence, but it is a very sure proof that the inheritance of the saints really belongs to you.

Another evidence is this: *we have secret supports in the time of trouble.* Here one could expatiate at great length if time would permit. "Underneath are the everlasting arms;" you are sustained when enduring awful pain, comforted under deep depression of spirit, strengthened for the work for which in yourself alone you are quite unequal, borne upward with holy joy in the midst of cruel slander; surely that is enough evidence for you.

Besides, the Lord gives to his people *secret delights*, and we sing, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." At such times, the Lord gives us *secret directions and instructions* which come to the soul direct from himself. Do not think me fanatical, for it is even as I say. These love-tokens come to the soul with a demonstration and a power, a delight and a rapture, which no words can ever express. They cannot be expressed, seeing that, in many instances, we hear, in the time of ecstatic joy, words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. We wrap these proofs up among the sealed evidences of our right to the heavenly inheritance.

Another sealed evidence is *the secret love which the child of God has to all others of the children of God.* "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." As to *the love we have to Jesus*, "We love him because he first loved us," and our love to him is one of the evidences of his love to us. We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. "God my exceeding joy" is a sweet name that David gives to the Lord, and then he adds, "I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God." I love to sing it as the hymn version puts it,—

> "For yet I know I shall him praise,
> Who graciously to me,
> The health is of my countenance,
> Yea, mine own God is he."

If you feel this intense love to the Lord and to his people, that is one of your sealed evidences.

But once again, and I should like to enlarge on all these points, but I must not, those *inward conflicts* which you now have, that struggling in your soul between right and wrong, the new man seeking

to get the victory over the old corrupt nature, all these are your sealed evidences. So, also, are the *victories* which God gives you, when he treads evil passions beneath the feet of the new-born Man-child, who is the image of Christ within you, when you conquer yourself, when you subdue anger, when you go forth to do, by the strength of God, what else your nature would shrink from; all these are blessed evidences, signed, and sealed, to be rolled up, and put away, to be seen by no eye but your own, and the eye of the Most High. These, then, are the sealed evidences of our faith.

I have been obliged to hurry over this part of my subject because I want just a few minutes now to dwell upon the open evidences.

II. Let us consider, secondly, THE OPEN EVIDENCES OF OUR FAITH. There is a counterpart of the sealed title-deed. What are these open evidences of our faith?

They are such proofs as others can see; and the first of such evidences that we are the children of God must be *the open Word of God itself.* I read the Bible, and I say, "Well, if this Book be true, I am a saved man: if this is really a divine revelation, then I am saved." Beloved, have you that open evidence of your salvation? That is the best evidence in the whole world. When Peter was writing concerning the Transfiguration of Christ, he added, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." The Lord Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I believe in him; therefore I shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The open volume of the Word of God is our open evidence of salvation.

Next to that, the open evidence of our right to the inheritance is *a thorough change of life such as other people can see.* Is it so with you? Has there been a distinct crisis in your being? Have you been turned from darkness unto light? Have you been brought from the power of Satan unto God? Does your husband know of the change? Does your wife see it? Do your father and mother notice it? Does your master perceive it, if you are a domestic servant? I do think that, in some persons, conversion works so marked a change that the people of the neighbourhood in which they live must see it. Distinctly do I recall here a man whose voice was uncommonly loud when he prayed at the prayer-meetings. I was only a child, then, but I said to myself, "I have heard that man's voice before," and so I had, but I was surprised to hear it in prayer, for I had heard him swear on board ship. He was a captain, and he swore as if he had swallowed a trumpet; and there he was converted, and he was speaking in the same trumpet-tones to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Where a man has been a gross offender, there will be a conversion which men and angels and devils will be sure to see; and this is one of the open evidences that he is a Christian. May you all be such epistles of Christ that you may be known and read of all men!

Another open evidence is *separation from the world.* A man who is really a child of God cannot, after his conversion, consort with his old companions. As one said to me this week, "When I was in the shop,

they began to talk some lewdness, and to utter filthy words, and I just took up my hat, and went away, for I heard this text in my ears, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Separation from the world is one of the open evidences of a child of God. You do not come away from them because you dislike the people, but because you cannot bear their evil ways. They find pleasure in that which is a sorrow to you; that which is food to them is poison to you; and you say to yourself, "My Lord would not wish to come and find me in this society," so you come away from them.

The next open evidence is found in *union with the people of God*, making them your companions, taking a delight in them. Depend upon it, we shall for ever go with those who are our chosen friends here; the people who are our companions on earth will be our companions in the world to come. Tares will be bound up in bundles with the tares; but the wheat will be bound up with the wheat. This, then, is another open evidence of your adoption into the family of God, when you love the people of God, and seek their company.

One very clear open evidence is *strict honesty, uprightness, and integrity in business*. Do not tell me that you are a child of God if you can cheat your fellow-men. You may tell that to whomsoever you like; but it will not be believed by any man who reads his Bible. Straightforward honesty should always be the mark of every professor of the religion of Christ. Your word must be your bond, and you must sooner fail in business than do the smallest thing that would be contrary to the strictest integrity. This will become to many an open evidence which they can read.

One very open evidence of a change of heart, and of our possession of the inheritance, is *a readiness to forgive*. If you cannot suffer a wrong, and continue to cherish resentment for it, how dwelleth the love of God in you? How can you ever pray the prayer of the believer, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," when you have to stammer as you come to "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us." Cheerful readiness to forgive any injury done to ourselves, to overlook any wrong-doing whatsoever, is one of the open evidences that we are the children of God.

Another open evidence is one which we often get, and do not like, that is, *the opposition of the world*. If any man will serve God faithfully, he will be sure to have the dogs of hell at him. If you were to go through a village where you had never been before, the dogs would come out and bark at you; but if you belonged to the parish, they would know you, and they would not take any notice of you. If you are a stranger to the world, and a citizen of heaven, the devil's dogs will howl at your heels. They cannot help it, for it is their nature. Thank God, Isaac, when Ishmael mocks you; for it is a mark that you are of the true seed, and that Ishmael is not.

Another open evidence, and one that is very sweet, is *a holy patience in time of trouble, and especially in the hour of death*. Often have God's people, when racked with pain, been able to rejoice in God; and

when heart and flesh have failed them, and the death-sweat has been standing on their brow, they have been able even then, if not to sing, at least to say, "The Lord is my shepherd." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

III. I wish that Time would have paused for a while to-night; but he has not. I must not keep you beyond our usual hour, so I will close with just two or three words upon THE USES TO WHICH WE PUT THESE EVIDENCES.

One of them is that *they often yield us comfort.* There is truth in Dr. Watts's hymn,—

> "When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I bid farewell to every fear,
> And wipe my weeping eyes."

It takes the sting out of every trouble when we know that the heavenly inheritance is surely ours.

Then again, these evidences *answer the unjust charges of Satan* when he comes, and says, "You are not a child of God." Ah, but we have the evidences of our salvation, the sealed evidence and the open evidence, and we answer him boldly!

And above all things, I think that we ought to value these evidences because *they will be produced in court at the last day.* That is the most solemn thing of all. See how the Lord Jesus, the great Advocate of his people, produces the evidence in court: "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink:" and so on. He produces this evidence of a work of grace in their hearts, and says to them, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Brothers and sisters, do you possess these evidences? If you have none, do not try to forge them. For God's sake, and your own sake, do not commit forgery in such a matter as this. If you have not these evidences, pray God that you may know that you have not, and go straightway to Christ to-night as a sinner. You have plenty of evidence that you are a sinner, and Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Put your trust in him now, and receive from him the evidence that you are one of his people. If you have bad evidences, worthless evidences, forged evidences, fling them away; and pray God that you may get rid of whatever false comfort you have ever derived from them. If God has given you the true evidences, still come to Jesus, just as you are, for it will be your continual coming to Christ that will be your best standing evidence that you are truly in him. The Lord bring you all to Jesus to-night just as you are, whether saints or sinners; and then shall you rejoice in him! The Lord bless you, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—639, 641, 642.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH XXXII. 6—41.

Verses 6, 7. *And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum thine uncle shall come unto thee, saying, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it.*

God gave his servant an intimation of what was about to happen, so that he might know how to act. It did seem a very strange thing to come to a poor prophet in prison, and to ask him to buy a piece of land when the Chaldeans were in possession of it, and when there seemed to be no hope that he would ever see it. One said, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it;" but Jeremiah could not do this, for he was shut up in prison, and the enemy had possession of the field he was to buy. Still, the thing was of the Lord, and therefore it was right; and there is many an action which in itself might seem absurd, but which, nevertheless, is to be performed because it is according to the will of God.

8. *So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.*

Should a minister be concerned about the buying of land? Yes, if God bids him buy it. He is not to be entangled with the affairs of this life; but Jeremiah certainly could not be entangled with this field.

9. *And I bought the field of Hanameel my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.*

They always paid by weight to make sure that the amount was correct.

10, 11. *And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open:*

The transaction was all in proper legal form. We are not to be neglectful in business because we are the servants of the Lord; but in all things we should act as men of prudence and common sense.

12—14. *And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison. And I charged Baruch before them, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.*

They had no iron safes in those days; so their practice was to put their documents into earthen vessels, and bury them deep in the earth, where they reckoned they would be secure.

15. *For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.*

Therefore, as an act of faith in God, the prophet bought this meadow.

16. *Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,*

Jeremiah completes the business, puts the securities into safe keeping, and now he prays. It is always well to be free from care before you pray. Let nothing remain to be done, if it be possible, and then get alone, and

let your heart be free to speak with God. I do not suppose that Jeremiah prayed any the less or any the worse because he had attended to this business transaction. A man who lives near to God ought to be able to go from his counting-house to his closet with a happy heart.

17—19. *Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:*

Whenever you are troubled, think much of God; speak much of him. This is true adoration. It will be a great help to your own spirit. Your own littleness will be forgotten in the greatness of your God.

20—24. *Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day; and hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror; and hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey; and they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandedst them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them: behold the mounts,*

The earthworks thrown up about Jerusalem completely surrounded it; and the Chaldeans were hard at work breaking down the walls to capture the city while the people were dying of famine and disease.

24, 25. *They are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.*

Observe, it is hardly a prayer that Jeremiah utters; it is just a statement of his condition, and yet that is real prayer. When you do not know what to ask of God, state your difficulty; for that is the very best thing you can do. When you cannot see any way out of the maze, never mind; it is for God to show you the clue. There is often much sanctified common-sense in laying the difficulty before the Lord, spreading the letter before him, and leaving it there. When you cannot ask for deliverance in this way or that, it will be sufficient just to state the case as Jeremiah did.

26, 27. *Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying, Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?*

This is a grand question, an unanswerable question.

28—31. *Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it: and the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,*

Jerusalem was such a sinful city that it must be destroyed. The very roofs of the houses had been defiled by the sacrifices offered to idols. If these words were true of Jerusalem, surely they are also true in great measure of London. It has been a provocation of God's anger, "from the day that they built it even unto this day."

32. *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

They seemed, from the very highest to the lowest, determined to provoke the Lord, to show how little they cared for the Most High.

33. *And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face:*

Like men who wished to insult a king in his very court.

33. *Though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.*

It is a great aggravation of an offence against God when he has taught us, and yet we "have not hearkened to receive instruction."

34, 35. *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

If God had commanded them to offer up their children, they would have stood aghast at such cruelty; but they willingly sacrificed them to Molech in opposition to his will.

36, 37. *And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:*

God is angry, and yet gracious. The rest of the chapter is full of tenderness and love. It is enough to make our eyes fill with tears as we note how God speaks concerning those who had rebelled against him.

38. *And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:*

This is indeed a covenant of grace; it is not dealing with men after their sins, but according to the inexhaustible bounty of eternal love.

39, 40. *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.*

There is here a promise of double bliss. The Lord will not turn from his people, and they shall not turn from him. What more could God do than he here promises? It looks like a trial of strength between sin and grace. Sin was like a mountain; but the Lord's love was like the flood, which prevailed till even the mountains were covered.

41. *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.*

See how God puts his whole heart to the work when he is blessing his people. When he forgives sin, it is with his whole heart and soul. May we, with our whole heart and soul, repent of our sin; and then, with all our heart and soul, serve the Lord! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CHRIST-GIVEN REST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 5TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"I will give you rest."—Matthew xi. 28.

I AM afraid that we have not always noticed the fulness of this promise. Usually the text is preached from as an invitation to the unconverted to come to Christ, and very properly so: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is an invitation to all of you who are labouring after salvation, or are heavy laden with a load of sin, or the burden of your daily cares; you may come; you are bidden to come to the Lord Jesus, and he has promised that he will give you rest. But I must leave you to-night, so far as my sermon is concerned; for my main business will be with those who have come to Christ. After having given the invitation to those who are outside the Church of Christ, I pass inside, and I want those who are within to come into sweet communion with their Lord to-night while I dwell upon this very gracious promise, "I will give you rest."

I do not find, in this world, if I promise anything, that anybody ever forgets it. You try any of the societies connected with the Tabernacle; promise them a guinea, and see if they do not wait upon you for it. But the curious thing, the wretched thing is, that many of our Lord's promises are neglected by us. We do not wait upon him to have them fulfilled. After having read the promise, it passes out of our thoughts. Do not so to-night, I pray you. Here is the promise, "I will give you rest." Let no man here, who has come to Christ, be content to-night unless he gets the rest which the Lord Jesus promises to give. Jesus does not play at promising; do not you play with his promises; be as ready in receiving as he is willing to be in giving. "I will give you rest." This ought to be a very precious word to all believers. You have come to Christ; he promises to give you rest; be sure that you get it. Do not rest content until you have that perfect peace which he alone can give you, that peace which is here called "rest."

This evening I shall not have much time; but I shall, first, *exhibit this pearl*, this pearl of rest; secondly, I shall *point you to the hand which gives this pearl;* "*I* will give you rest;" and, thirdly, I shall for a few minutes *dwell upon the promise which Jesus makes:* "I will give you rest." It is a positive declaration of our Lord to those who come to him: "I will give you rest."

I. First, then, let me EXHIBIT THIS PEARL. Mild and soft is its radiance. I call it a pearl, because it is so precious, so blessed a thing. "I will give you rest."

Jesus does not say in what part of the mind he will give rest; for he will give it in every part of the mind. He does not say in reference to what he will give us rest, because he will give us rest in reference to everything. When a promise is general, you may take it in its widest possible meaning. Particulars restrain and restrict; but where there are no particulars, then you have unlimited range. "I will give you rest," rest about everything, rest at all times, rest in every part of your nature.

This promise includes *rest of the mind, or fixedness of belief.* Just now there is great restlessness concerning what we are to believe, and many persons are much tossed about by the contrary winds that blow. They believe black to-day, and white to-morrow. Some have fallen into such a condition that they believe nothing, unless, indeed, it should not happen to be in the Bible, and then they will believe it; but if it is in God's Word, then, of course, they feel it necessary to doubt it. I suppose there is nobody that is not affected to some extent by the tornado of doubt which is sweeping over this island, and over the whole world. Now, is there any child of God here who is perturbed in mind? You say to yourself, "I used to be a simple-minded believer; but I have been worried, tried, and troubled. I think that I shall have to buy some books upon Christian evidences, so as to look into the subject, and find out the strongest arguments; or I shall go and talk to some old Christian, and hear what he can say to strengthen me." Listen, my brother. Your Lord and Master says, "Come unto ME, and I will give you rest." There is a surer intellectual rest to be found in personal communion with Christ than anywhere else. If I get my head into his bosom, none of the philosophers can make it ache. When I once put my finger into the print of the nails, I am no more faithless, but believing. I believe that living in communion with God is the only sure cure for doubt. Trusting wholly to Christ crucified, resting in his precious blood, and daily seeking to have it applied to the conscience, and then walking in the light as God is in the light, is the surest way to end all those undermining processes which seek to destroy the very foundations of our hope. Come to Jesus to-night. Come to Jesus at the communion-table, and enter anew into fellowship with him, and you will be able to say, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise." After being with Jesus, half the questions that trouble you will be answered, and the other half will not seem worth the asking. After having been with him, most of your doubts will vanish, and the rest will not concern you one jot or tittle. You are his beloved, and your heart rests in that blessed fact.

Our Lord next gives *rest of the conscience, or a sense of pardon.* Conscience is a great source of unrest even to the best of men. Conscience does make cowards of us all, even those who are most daring in sin. With the child of God, there is no death of conscience; on the contrary, he who lives to the Lord has a more tender conscience than he ever had before he was saved. A tender conscience is a great blessing; never try to get rid of it. A morbid conscience may be a torment; but a tender conscience is a benediction; cherish it. Many blind persons read with their fingers; but if the fingers grow hard and callous, and the poor folk cannot feel the raised letters, it is a sad trial for them. We can often read the mind of God by the tender finger of conscience. Take care that your conscience never gets seared, I mean you Christian people. You need to keep your conscience more tender than that of anybody else; but suppose the conscience becomes restless, what are we to do with it? Brethren, there is no purging the conscience from dead works except by drawing near to Christ again. Have any of you Christian people slipped with your feet? Have you dishonoured the sacred name you bear? Be ashamed, and be confounded. Who among us has not much to make him ashamed? But remember that the Christ, who invites the erring sinner before conversion, invites the erring believer after conversion. Come, all ye that labour within your spirits, and are heavy laden under a sense of your imperfections, come to Christ again to-night. Where you once found rest in the atoning sacrifice, you shall find it again.

Do not let me go a step further till you have done this. Let us practise what I preach as we go along. You with your intellectual tossings, come to my Lord to-night, and see him on the tree, and look your doubts away; you with the troubled conscience because of your unworthy walk, come to the fountain, and be washed anew, and let your conscience find rest.

Supposing those two rests to be enjoyed, there is still a struggle going on; and therefore Christ gives *rest of the soul, or confidence of victory.* The soul, even when it knows its pardon is sure, even when it has settled its doctrinal difficulties, is nevertheless engaged in a struggle against the old nature. Do you find that you have completely gained the victory yet? Do you never feel a struggle within your spirit? I must confess that I have a daily fighting of my better self against the old self, the new-born nature against the old nature, which will, if it can, still keep its hold upon me. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" is my cry as I begin the battle; yet before I end it, I can say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If any of you are asking, "How shall I ever get the victory? See how I am tempted; see how weak I am in certain directions, constitutionally weak, and apt to slide; O sir, shall I ever be perfect? Shall I ever master inbred sin?" Listen, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus will give you rest in the sweet confidence that you will get the victory. He will bruise Satan under your feet. Surely, beloved, there will come a day when there will be no sin left in us. When we shall see the face of our Saviour in the glory-land, we shall be like him; all our doubts will

be dead, all our sins will be forgiven, and all our sinful tendencies will be for ever destroyed.

> "Then shall I see, and hear, and know
> All I desired or wish'd below;

and then shall I be rid of all that plagues me, and that grieves my God. Come to Jesus to-night, wrestling believer, and have fellowship with him; and you will have rest even in the midst of the conflict, for you will be sure that you shall ultimately overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

Besides this, Jesus gives *rest of the heart, or satisfaction in love.* Some people appear to have no heart; or rather, their heart is a kind of valve made of leather. I have sometimes looked at certain people with great wonder when I have seen how little they have ever been affected. They never have much joy; they never have much sorrow; they seem to have been placed between two millstones, and to have had all the juice pressed out of them; they appear to have no heart. But commend me to a man or woman with a big heart. Some seem to have a most affectionate nature; they must love. These are the people who have the most sorrow, though, mark you, they also have the most wonderful joy. Well, now, it may be that you have loved, and you have been deceived, or you have loved, and the fond object of your affection has been removed by death. You are here to-night with a sad countenance, you are saying, "What shall I do with this heart of mine? Where shall I love wisely, truly, without the hazard of another brokenness of heart?" Jesus stands to-night invisibly in our midst, and he says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." If you will love him, (and oh, how well he deserves your love!) if you will take him to be your Companion, your Friend, your Husband, if you will let him enter into your heart, and dwell there, if you will love him beyond all else, he will give you rest; and that kind of love which it is allowable to give to the creature, you shall be able to give without fear, when you have once given the heart itself to him who never fails, never disappoints, and never is untrue. All ye who wander with your great loving hearts aching for lack of love, come to my Lord, and he will give you rest. I see you to-night, like the vine with its tendrils, seeking that by which you may climb higher; come, and let your tendrils entwine themselves about my Lord, and his sweet words of grace, and you shall get a good hold, and grow and climb even to the skies.

> "Art thou weary? art thou languid?
> Art thou sore distrest?
> 'Come to me,' saith One; 'and coming,
> Be at rest.'"

I will not enlarge upon this point further than to say, as I have already told you, that Christ gives *rest of the entire being, or peace about everything.* Are you troubled, dear child of God, to-night? You ought not to be troubled about anything. "Ah, sir! you do not know my position." No matter, friend, that I do not know it; HE who bids you come to him knows it. "But, dear sir, my affliction is peculiar." Listen: "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Yours

cannot be peculiar, therefore; Jesus must know all about it; and if he knows, it is better than my knowing. "But I have such a heavy cross to carry." Is it heavier than his? "Ah, sir, but I have so many trials!" Are there more than he can enable you to endure? Come to him, I pray you. Now then, if you can, at least for a few minutes, divest yourselves of your cares, your anxieties, your doubts, your fears. There he stands, he of the pierced feet, and the nailed hands, and the crimson side, there he stands in glory, and he bids you come to him, and trust him. Lay your burdens down at his feet. Why should you carry what he will readily carry for you? Tell him all your griefs. Why do you hide them from him? Should he not know your heart if you are married to him? Should there be a secret kept away from him? I am persuaded that I am preaching to you what will be more healing than the balm of Gilead, and sweeter than the sweetest music to lull you into a delightful peace, if you will but listen to this gospel invitation, and come to Jesus, by a simple act of faith, and by a great resolve of fellowship, for he says, "I will give you rest."

So much, then, about this pearl, rest.

II. Now I want you to look, for a minute or two, at THE HAND WHICH GIVES THIS PEARL: "*I* will give you rest." If Jesus Christ will give me anything, I will be glad to have it. The least possible gift from him has a special sanctity about it, because it comes from his dear hand. Your friend gave you a broken sixpence, and you have kept it. Your mother gave you (alas! you have no mother now,) a little book with her name in it, and you would not sell it for its weight in silver. Now, whatever Jesus gives is a keepsake to his people. They lay it by, and they love it. Listen then. He says, "*I* will give you rest."

If he will give me rest, then I know that his giving it *guarantees its genuineness.* I shall have no false peace if Jesus gives it to me. He will never give counterfeit coin to his people. If he gives me peace, it is peace. "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Beloved, do you not see that the fact that Jesus gives it will make your peace to be to you, beyond all question, the true peace of God, which passeth all understanding?

Christ's gift of this rest also *proves the value of the gift.* Jesus does not give us pebble-stones and straws. If he gives us rest, it is rest worth having. Oh, beloved, did you ever enjoy the rest that Jesus gives? Were you ever tossed about with a great trial? Did you ever have a heavy load of care? If you have never had such burdens, I have; I have lain awake at night wondering whatever I should do in certain cases; and at last I have come to the conclusion that I could not do anything, and that I must leave all with the Lord. Did you never wake up, after a little sleep, when you had cast all your care on Christ, and left your troubles with him, and found yourself perfectly at rest? I have, sometimes, in the midst of great pain, sat up in the night, and been afraid to go to sleep for fear I should lose the heavenly calm that I was enjoying. When I have left everything,—and God knows that I have more cares to carry than most men,—when I have left everything with him, and submitted

myself absolutely to his sweet will, and had full fellowship with Christ, I have wondered what I could fret about if I tried. I have said to myself, "There is peace for me in heaven; there is peace for me on earth; there is peace for me in the grave; there is peace for me everywhere." It was with my heart, as it was with the stormy sea when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," "and there was a great calm." This is the kind of rest that the Lord Jesus Christ gives; rest of the deepest, truest kind, rest which the world cannot give, and which the world cannot possibly take away. If he gives rest, it is no second quality rest; it is first-class; it is beyond measure precious if it comes from his hand.

Note again, Jesus says, "I will *give* you rest." If his hand gives it, this *ensures your getting it.* Jesus does not say, "I will send you rest." It might be lost in the post. He does not say, "I will commission an angel to bring you rest." He might miss his way. It is, "I will *give* you rest." Come you to Jesus, and you shall have rest, out of his own hand put into your hand; nay, put into your heart. You shall certainly get it; there will be no missing it; between the cup and the lip there shall be no slip.

Jesus saith, "I will give you rest." This *ensures your right to it.* When a believer is at peace and rest, if the devil were to meet him, he would ask, "Why are you so quiet?" If you did not answer him, he would say, "What right have you to be at rest? You are a long way off being perfect. Look at the imperfections of yesterday. Why, even in your prayers you sinned!" "Ah!" says the child of God, "I am not going to dispute with you, Satan; but I have a right to rest, for Jesus gave it to me. I am sure that he did not steal it; and I am certain that he gave it to me. My title-deeds are clear enough. A free gift through Jesus Christ, who can ever dispute that?" Oh, child of God, enjoy what Jesus gives, and be not afraid that anyone will take it from thee!

Do you not think that, when Jesus says, "I will give you rest," this should *encourage you to enjoy it*? I do believe that some Christians are afraid of being too happy. Do I not recollect when I first knew the Lord? I was as merry as a lark. I felt so glad that my sins were forgiven, I said within myself,—

"I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

Some good old Christian man shook his head. "Ah!" he said, "the black ox has not trodden on your toes yet." Well, I had not seen the animal; so I went on rejoicing. Then another said to me, "Some Christians are many years before they come to anything like assurance." That did a little stagger me; and they told me about the dragons and the giants that there were on the pilgrim's road. I have not seen any of them yet; but those good people tried to frighten me with them. Now look here, beloved; there is none too much joy in the world. Do not you go about killing any whenever you see it; rather try to encourage it; and if you see a young Christian happy in believing, and you do not happen to be as cheerful as he is, do not try and take from him his joy. Leave the black ox alone; the ugly beast will come in due time. Warn the young believer of all the sin

against which he should be on his guard; but do not hold up before him a gloomy view of the Christian life. You, Christian, have a right to perfect peace; and if, between here and heaven, you never have a doubt, if between here and the Eternal City you never have an anxious care, you have a perfect right to that complete serenity. It is, I say, provided for you in the Word of God. If you do not have it, and enjoy it, that is your own fault; but there is ample provision made that we should have heaven below as well as heaven above. Oh, Christian people, if we lived up to our privileges, if we realized the truth of the text, "I will give you rest," we should commend the gospel, we should win converts, we should glorify God, we should be vastly more useful ourselves! "I will give you rest," is an encouragement to the enjoyment of the rest that Jesus gives to those who come unto him.

And, once more, if Christ says, "I will give you rest," how *it endears him to us!* If all my rest is what he gives me, shall I not love him? Oh, if my weary spirit is like Noah's dove, finding no rest for the sole of its foot till it comes back to Noah, to Christ, and to the ark, shall I not love him who is my rest? Shall I not prove that love by consecrating to him the life which he has made so happy? Shall not every step I take seem to ring out music of praise to his name? Shall I not open the gates of the morning with a song, and draw the curtains of the night with a new note of thanksgiving? Truly, God has given us this rest. The Romans said of a certain peace that they enjoyed, "a god has given it to us." Behold, the Son of God has given us that deep repose which, as believers, we have a right to enjoy, and which, I trust, we do enjoy to-night. If you do not enjoy it, do not let me go any further until you do get it. Come, child of God, I am not going simply to talk about this matter; I want you to practise it. There is the hand, the pierced hand, which gives you rest; take the rest from it, and enjoy it now, and then kiss that hand, with a fervour of deepest reverence, because of this priceless gift which it has bestowed upon you.

III. I close by noticing, in the third place, very briefly, THE PROMISE WHICH JESUS MAKES: "I will give you rest." It is a great blessing, sometimes, not to be able to read well. You remember how Mrs. Beecher Stowe, when she wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin", pictured Uncle Tom as having to spell all the words over. Now, it is a great blessing if a person is obliged to read the Bible like that. "I—will—give—you—rest." Every word seems to be emphatic if you will just let it speak. All these bells ring out music; but I have no time to ring them to-night. Will you please to listen to their melodious chimes all the week?

"I—will—give—you—rest." *To this promise there is but one condition.* That we have already fulfilled if we have come to Christ; and therefore there is no condition at all attached to the promise, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." We have come to him; unless we are hypocrites, we who are coming to the communion-table have first come to Christ. We have really, truly, sincerely, looked unto him, trusted him, come to him, and hidden ourselves in him. Very well, then, you have fulfilled the one and only condition attached to this promise of

the Lord Jesus; and there stands the unconditional promise which applies to you to-night. Let me go over it again, "I—will—give—you—rest."

This promise is made only to one character, and that character we can easily feel to be our own: "All ye that labour and are heavy laden." You are the children of God, but you still have to labour; the most of you have to work hard daily, and you have also much spiritual labour to serve your Lord, and to keep off the adversary. You labour both for the meat that perisheth, and for that which endureth unto life eternal. I am afraid that there are none of us who do not at times get heavy laden, especially when we get away from our Lord. Oh, what a load comes on us unless we keep close to him! Very well, then, if to-night you labour and are laden, come along with you, and Christ will give you rest. I mean my fidgety sister over yonder, who is always fretting; you love the Lord, and yet you keep fretting. Come, have done with it, for he says to you, "I will give you rest." I mean also my timid brother over there, who is always afraid of something that never happens. Give up that nonsense. Come along with you, you weary and heavy laden one, Jesus says to you, "I will give you rest." I mean that dear brother there, who has a darkness over his mind that he cannot shake off. Come to Jesus, and he will give you rest. I mean myself, caring about the Church of God, and almost broken-hearted at times as I see how ill it fares in these evil days. I will come to my Lord to-night, and he will give me rest about that; for, after all, I have not to manage his Church, and guide his affairs. Nay, all responsibilities and all dreads about the future I lay down at thy feet, thou great Head of the Church, thou great Master of assemblies!

Next, notice that *this promise is most positive and unreserved:* "I will give you rest." Jesus does not say, "I will give you rest in every respect but one." No, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." And the mercy of it is, that *this promise is as sure as ever.* A hundred years ago, a man went to the Lord Jesus with this promise, "I will give you rest," and the Lord Jesus gave him rest. Fifty years ago, another man went with this promise, and he said "Lord, there it is! Thou sayest, 'I will give you rest,'" and the Lord gave him rest. Now to-night take that promise to yourselves; it is just as good as if it had never been fulfilled. I give my neighbour a cheque; he goes with it to the bank, and gets the cash for it. Now suppose the banker returns that cheque to me, and I go with it to the bank, and try to cash it again. "No," say they, "we have cashed that cheque once, and that is done with." But you may take God's cheque, and go to the Bank of Heaven every day, and every hour in the day, and the cheque is just as good as if it had never been cashed before. "I will give you rest." You tried that when you were one-and-twenty; try it now that you are seventy. When you were forty, in the day of your trouble, you said, "Lord, give me rest;" now that you are eighty, the promise still stands just as good as ever. God's promises are not like a bundle of old cheques that are done with, and sent back to the drawer; they are ever fresh and ever new.

Many of you are coming to the communion-table. *This rest is set*

forth to you in the ordinance. That table seems to say to you, "I will give you rest." I shall not ask you to come up to the platform, and to kneel down, and take the bread from my hands. I shall ask you to sit as much at your ease as ever you can, because, at the Lord's supper, that is the right posture. When Christ broke the bread, the disciples did not even sit, but reclined around the table. You miss the very spirit of the supper if you come and kneel. It is a festival of rest; and when you come to it, you have nothing to do but to eat and to drink. That is the form in which Christ puts fellowship with himself, "You shall eat with me, and you shall drink with me;" so that, in the ordinance, he does by the outward symbol say, "I will give you rest."

This promise will be completely fulfilled at the last. By-and-by, by-and-by, Christ will give us eternal rest. There is a brother to whom I have been accustomed to take off my hat every Sabbath as I passed along; he was one of a goodly number of regular old friends, all along the road, that I could not speak to, but we just bowed and wished each other well as we passed. Last Sabbath I missed my friend from the place where I generally passed him, and I asked about him, and they told me that he had gone home. There have been many who have gone home since I was with you before. Well, then, we also may expect to go home by-and-by; and here is the Master's promise about that matter, "I will give you rest." "I will give you rest when the last hour comes. When the time of weakness, and old age, and sickness comes, I will give you rest." Be not afraid.

> "Death is no more the king of dread,
> Since our Immanuel rose;"

and all the Lord's people may go up to their beds, and rejoice to think that there is an end to this life of conflict, and a beginning to the life of victory, for Jesus says, "I will give you rest."

Oh, the perfect repose, the unutterable bliss, that will be yours and mine before long! I say "before long", for in this great congregation I do not doubt that there are several brothers and sisters who will see the King in his beauty before many weeks are gone. I could wish that it were my lot to go first among you; but if it may not be, well, you shall go on a little ahead, my brothers and my sisters, and we will follow in our turn. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

I have done—at least, I mean, I have only begun; I have begun to enjoy the text myself, and I hope you have done the same. I must, however, just remind you that, when Jesus says, "I will give you rest," he does not mean that he will make you lazy. Lazy people cannot rest; they never know what rest means. There must be labour to give us rest. When Cæsar Malan had seventeen days' rest, in which he was charged by the physician not to exercise his mind, or do anything, he wrote fifty-three of the best hymns he had ever written, and some of the best in the French tongue. He said that he could not help it; he wrote the hymns because he was resting, and they were a part of his rest. God sometimes makes his servants to be like those

birds that rest on the wing. Stretching their broad pinions, and taking a mighty flap, they seem to pass mile after mile at every stroke of their wings, resting while flying. Thus you may stretch your pinions of progress, and of holy aspiration, and rise higher and higher, and yet be still at rest. Like the stars, that have a deep and profound rest, both by day and night, and yet keep their courses, and know no fatigue, so you and I, blessed of God, shall keep our places, and serve our God, and shine on, and yet shall rest till we enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

I wish that it were possible for me to make every child of God here quite restful to-night. I know that I shall fail; but there is a blessed Spirit who can do it. When you are all quite restful, go home at rest. Go home, dear wife, with a restful heart. Perhaps your husband will meet you with an angry word. Be so restful that you will not mind it. Go home, dear young people, who have to work for your living. Perhaps you will sleep to-night in a room where there are many who will mock you if you kneel down to pray. Get such perfect rest that it will not matter to you whether they laugh or not. Take no more notice than you do of the grinding of the cab-wheels outside this Tabernacle. The Lord can give his people such absolute peace that it would not matter to them if heaven and earth should pass away. God grant to us that perfect peace! If any of you do not know anything about it, I wish that you did; but there it stands in the text, just as Christ said it, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." God help you to come, and take the rest that Jesus gives! Amen.

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Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

COLOSSIANS II. 6—17.

Verse 6. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*

Do not go away from him. You have received him; keep to him. Whatever he was to you at first, let him be that to you to the very last. Do not begin with Christ, and then go back to self; let it be all Christ from first to last.

7. *Rooted and built up in him,*

Growing in him. Have your very life, like a tree, rooted in Christ; and like a temple, built up in Christ.

7. *And stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*

Do not forget what you have been taught; do not reject it; keep to it. He who should learn one system of philosophy, and then unlearn it, and begin another, and then unlearn that, and begin another, would be more likely to turn out a fool than a philosopher; and he who begins to learn the faith in one way, and then tries to learn it in another way, and then attempts to learn it in yet another way, is more likely to be a sceptic than to be a saint.

8. *Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*

Plenty of people would spoil you in this way, by teaching you their profound thoughts, their grand inventions, their bright ideas. Beware of all of them.

9. *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

Everything, then, must be in Christ if all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him. Why do you want to go anywhere else for wisdom? What can you find by going elsewhere? "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

10. *And ye are complete in him,*

You are like vessels filled up to the brim. You are like warriors thoroughly furnished, fully armed for the fight: "Ye are complete in him."

10, 11. *Which is the head of all principality and power: in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:*

All that the Jew ever had you have in Christ, only you have the real purification of which his rite was but a symbol.

12. *Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*

It is only as you are one with Christ that baptism will be to you what he intended; but "buried with him in baptism," you are dead to all beside, and all your life lies in him.

13. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him,*

All your life is in Christ; you are "quickened together with him."

13. *Having forgiven you all trespasses;*

Your pardon is given to you in Christ. Oh, how full and how free is that forgiveness that comes to you through Christ Jesus!

14, 15. *Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

His cross was his triumph. Then he led captivity captive. What more do you want? Your enemy is vanquished, your sins blotted out, your death changed to life, your necessities all supplied. Will you not stay at home with Christ? "Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?" Canst thou have a better lover than thy Lord, a dearer husband than the heavenly Bridegroom? Oh, love the Lord, ye his saints; cling to him, and make much of him; let him be all in all to you!

16. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

Do not let anybody come in, and tell you that it is necessary for your salvation that you should abstain from this meat or that drink, that there is a merit in fasting for forty days in Lent, or that you cannot be saved without observing such and such a holy day. Your salvation is in Christ. Keep you to that, and add nothing to this one foundation which is once for all laid in him.

17. *Which are a shadow of things to come;*

That is all that they are: "a shadow of things to come."

17. *But the body is of Christ.*

Christ is the real one thing needful. Mind that you have the substance, for then you can let the shadows go.

May God bless to us all this brief reading of his Word!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—422, 722, 808.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THORNS AND THISTLES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 12TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

"Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."—Genesis iii. 18.

THIS was not the penalty which might have been pronounced upon Adam. This curse does not fall directly on him; it glances obliquely, and falls upon the ground whereon he stands: "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." It is not from materialism that a curse comes upon the spirit of man; but it is from the erring spirit that the curse falls upon the material creation. Let us notice this, and learn from it the infinite mercy of God, in that, while the curse falls upon the serpent distinctly, and his head is bruised, yet upon Adam it comes, as I have said, obliquely. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake." "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." God in his justice never goes beyond justice even in pronouncing his severest sentence; but here in this life he tempers his justice with great patience and longsuffering, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Another thing is very noticeable, that though the ground was now to bear thorns and thistles to Adam, yet he was to be above ground, and alive to till it. Had the sentence been carried out to the full, a yawning grave would have opened at his feet, and there would have been no more of Adam; but he was permitted still to live. Now, whenever thorns and thistles spring up about your path, do not murmur. "Wherefore doth a *living* man complain?" When a felon lies in the dungeon, and the sentence of death has been passed upon him, if his life is spared, he may be quite content to live on bread and water for the rest of his days. Thank God that you are not in hell; thank God that life is still prolonged to you. You are on praying ground and pleading terms with God, even though that ground may bring forth thorns and thistles to you. "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." We are still spared; and though there are thorns and thistles springing up around us, yet, still, that is a light punishment compared with what we really deserve to suffer.

And, then, notice one thing more, how sweetness can be extracted from that which is sour. If the ground was to bring forth thorns and thistles to Adam, then he was still to live. Not only was he alive, but he was still to live on, for the Lord added, "And thou shalt eat the herb of the field." Although the sentence took away from Adam the luscious fruits of paradise, yet it secured him a livelihood. He was to live; the ground was to bring forth enough of the herb of the field for him to continue to exist. Albeit that henceforth all he ate was to be with the sweat of his face, yet still he was to have enough to eat, and he was to live on. Thorns and thistles might multiply; but there would be the herb of the field for him, and he would be spared. The promises of God are often veiled by his threatenings; and if faith can only look beneath the rough covering of the message, something cheerful and hopeful may be found within. Brothers and sisters, you will have trials, thorns also and thistles shall the ground bring forth to you; but your bread shall be given you, your waters shall be sure. You have been provided for until now, notwithstanding many straits and trials: and it shall be so to the end. The manna shall not cease till you eat the old corn of Canaan. Till you want no more, God will not cease to feed you all your life long. So, if the text to-night shall sound somewhat gloomy, and you expect a very thorny and thistly sermon, yet I trust that there will be much to cheer and comfort those of you who have found it true in your experience, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

I should like to say to those here who have their portion in this life, that it is not much of a portion. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and, if this is all you have, you have a very poor pittance to live upon.

> "There is beyond the sky
> A heaven of joy and love;"

but beneath the sky there is no such heaven. Even for the godly there are thorns and thistles; but for you who are not godly, thorns and thistles are all that you have. If you have no heritage on the other side of Jordan, in the land of the hereafter, in the dwelling-place of the blessed, it were better for you that you had never been born. Notwithstanding all the transient delights that you now possess, they will only be as the crackling of thorns under a pot, soon over, and nothing but a handful of ashes left in everlasting darkness. Oh, that you would learn from this not to set your affection upon things below, but to be looking for a better and a brighter land, where the thorn never grows, and the thistle never springs up!

But now let us come to the handling of our text, thorny though it may seem to be.

I. And, first, A GENERAL FACT is here stated. This fact we will consider. Ever since that first sin of our first parents, this has been generally true of the whole human race, not only of the earth literally, but of everything else round about us, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

It is so with regard to *the natural world.* This world is full of beauty; it is full of light; it yields a thousand pleasures; but still it

is full of terror. There is much, indeed, to distress the frail mortals who live in this world. Have you ever been to sea in a storm? Have you not felt as if nature were at war with you then? Have you never been on the land in some tremendous thunderstorm, when the whole earth seemed to shake, and the skies were split with the fiery bolts? Ah, then you have felt that this world is not quite a paradise since man has become a sinner! The stars of heaven do not fight for him, but they sometimes fight against him. There are many things in this world, with its stern laws, that make it a place that has not all the comfort that a creature might wish. He is a sinful creature; and although he does not suffer all the discomfort that he deserves, yet this world is changed from what it was when God placed Adam in it to delight himself in paradise.

As it is in the natural world, so it is in *the social world*. You go out into the wide world of trade and business, and I think you find that thorns also and thistles does it bring forth to you. You do not have a week's dealing, a week's work, a week's going to and fro in this world without getting a pricking thorn here and there. If we do not all have to complain of this experience, I think we who are Christians will all admit that the world is not congenial to a believing man or woman. The society of the world is not helpful to a holy heart. To have to mix in it is rather a task, for which we need much grace, as we cry, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." You cannot have much to do with the men of the world without finding that many of them are sharper than a thorn hedge; and you cannot go to and fro in the earth without discovering that you are surrounded by those who make thorns and thistles to grow up all around you. Be not surprised when this is the case, for it is only what your Lord foretold: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

It is the same, also, in *the religious world*. We read, in the Book of Hosea, that they turned aside from God, and set up altars; and afterwards it is said, "The thorns and the thistles shall come up on their altars." The worst thorns and thistles that ever wound my heart are those that grow in religious circles. To see God's truth dishonoured, to have the glory of Christ's substitution denied, to hear doctrines preached which would be novel if they were not old errors new vamped, and brought forth from the oblivion in which they deserved to rot, and to see Christian people behave themselves as some of them do, having little respect to the name of him whom they profess to serve, and bringing discredit on the sacred cause for which they ought to be willing to die rather than to cast a slur upon it, these are thorns and thistles that pierce us to the very heart. You can neither live in the church nor live in the world without finding that this present state of life brings forth thorns and thistles to men, ay, to Christian men, too! Not only to the first Adam and to his seed, but to the second Adam and to his seed, this present state has this as one of its certain characteristics, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

I will go a little further, and tread upon delicate ground. I am afraid that you have many of you felt that, even in *the little family world* in which you move, you are not left without trials. God, when he took away paradise as our home, gave us home to be our paradise; and if there be a place where all felicities are to be found, it is around the family hearth. "East and west, home is best." "There is no place like home;" yet where is there a home without affliction? The dear child whom you love sickens and dies; perhaps the wife or the husband may be taken away to the long home; or poverty comes in; or one whom you love dearer than yourself pines daily with constant sickness and frequent agony. No, we must not expect perfect peace, perfect felicity, even in the home which is blessed with morning and evening prayer, where God locks up the door at night and draws the curtains in the morning; no, not even there, my dear friends, shall we be free from the curse that sin brought into this fair world. Still will this word follow us into the sacred precincts of our own dwellings, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

And it is so if you get a little closer home still, to the microcosm or *little world of your own self*. There is no part of man which does not yield him its thorns. Many of us have a thorn in the flesh. Is there any part of the body which may not, if God so wills it, become the subject of disease, and consequently the source of pain to us? I know some whom God dearly loves,—I know he loves them, for he favours them very highly,—who nevertheless find that in the body of this flesh there are the seeds of corruption. There are the bitter wells of Marah by reason of sharp pain of body; and as to the mind itself, what mind is there that is fullest of faith, and most joyful in the Lord, which is not naturally still the subject of grief? There will come times of depression, seasons of apprehension, nights when the light of God's countenance is withdrawn, or when, though we know that we possess the love of God, it is not shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost to the same extent as in our brighter hours. Yes, and even in the soul itself, by reason of the imperfection of our sanctification, from the fact that we are not so filled by the Spirit, and not so conscious of the abiding of the Spirit within us as we yet shall be, thorns also and thistles are brought forth to us. I may be speaking to some who can say, with an emphasis, that they oftentimes find great crops of thistles springing up in their hearts, and they have to keep the sickle of sacred mortification going to cut them down, and they try if possible to dig them up by the roots. But thus it is; you cannot expect a perfect life of happiness in an imperfect world like this. No; your Saviour carried the cross, and you will have a cross of some kind or other to carry after him. "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

Now, still dwelling on this dreary fact, as we have it foretold in the text, let us learn from the text itself, first, that *trials will come spontaneously*. Nobody is so foolish as to sow thorns and thistles. I have often wondered who that great fool must have been, who, being a Scotchman, desired to see the old Scotch thistle growing up in New Zealand, and therefore sent a packet of seed out there to poison, with his precious thistle, that land where there were none

before. I think the man who would venture to sow even one seed of a thistle in such a world as this, where thistles grow quite plentifully enough, must have gone a long way in folly. But if, dear friend, you never cause trouble to others, and do nothing that can bring trouble to yourself,—and you will be a wonderfully wise man if that is the case,—yet, still, troubles will come of themselves. If you want a herb of the field that you are to feed upon, you must sow it. Your wheat and your barley, you must sow with care. As to the thorns and thistles, you need not take any trouble about sowing them; they will spring up of themselves spontaneously; and so will the afflictions and tribulations of this life come to you without any effort on your part.

And, as they come spontaneously, so *trials will come unavoidably.* I mind not how careful a man may be with his farm, he will find thorns and thistles springing up, and needing to be destroyed. He may have ploughed and harrowed, and done his best to get rid of every thistle in autumn before it has seeded, and yet he cannot keep the troublesome things out; they will be sure to come. So you may rest assured that troubles of heart, and troubles of body, and troubles of mind will come to you, watch and guard against them as you may. All the prudence and care, ay, and all the prayer and faith that you can summon to your help, will not keep you clear of these thorns and thistles. As they are spontaneous, so are they unavoidable.

To many, also, *trials are very abundant.* "*Thorns* also and *thistles*"; not *a* thorn and *a* thistle, but thorns and thistles, and plenty of them, shall it bring forth to you. If any of you are vexed with trial after trial, I pray you do not think it a strange thing; you are not at all alone in such an experience. Many of you, because of your troubles, will get alone, and say, "I am the man that hath seen affliction." Stop; I can find you another man who can equal you, and many women who can surpass you in their afflictions. The path of sorrow is trodden by thousands of feet; it is hard with traffic; but as it leads to the eternal kingdom when a believer's foot is upon it, we need only rejoice to follow the footsteps of the flock, and look upon our trials as the tokens that we are where the great Shepherd leads us. Thus we sing,—

> "Is this, dear Lord, that thorny road
> Which leads us to the mount of God?
> Are these the toils thy people know,
> While in the wilderness below?
>
> "'Tis even so, thy faithful love
> Doth thus thy children's graces prove;
> 'Tis thus our pride and self must fall,
> That Jesus may be all in all."

Thorns and thistles come abundantly; and *trials come very variously.* It is not one form of trouble alone, but other forms also: "Thorns also *and thistles.*" You may think that it is bad enough to be yourself ill; but to be poor as well, to have also a sick child, and to be assailed by a slanderous enemy, seems more than you can bear. Ah, well, you are to expect these things! If you had only one form of trouble, perhaps you would grow used to it, and therefore it might lose its

effect. It is the very fact that it wounds that makes it useful to us. Solomon says, "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." No tribulation for the present is joyous; if it were, it would not be tribulation at all. If the rod does not make the child smart, what is the use of it? And if our troubles do not make us grieve, why then they are not troubles, and there is no room for grace to support us under them! We may expect to have trials of every sort and size, for they attend the followers of the Lamb as long as they are in the world that lies under this curse, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

I think that, without straining the text, I may say that *trials will come very frequently*, for thorns and thistles seem to spring up very early in the morning, and very early in the spring, and very late in the autumn, and even far into the winter. When is there a time when a man in this world, ay, a Christian man, too, can be sure that he will be perfectly free from trouble?

And *trials come universally*. I have seen thorns and thistles on the tops of the Surrey Hills, growing by myriads, enough to seed a kingdom with them; and if you go down into the valley, into the poor man's little plot of ground, you will find thorns and thistles there. They grow in the gardens of Windsor Castle as well as in the backyard of your lodging-house. Thorns also and thistles grow anywhere, on dunghills or in conservatories; they seem to be universally scattered. The downy wings carry the thistle-seed everywhere, and it springs up in most unlikely places. If you think that other people are to be envied because of their freedom from trial, it is possible that, if you knew more about them, you would find that they were to be pitied, and that your lot, after all, is much better than theirs.

Now, I am not going to say any more about this general fact, a fact which I suppose most of you know quite as well as I do, that thorns and thistles, trials and troubles, abound in this sin-cursed world.

II. But now, in the second place, THIS FACT HAS TO BE FACED: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

Now know this, you Christian people especially, know this, and then *it will prevent disappointments*. If you begin your Christian life imagining that, because you are a Christian, everything is to go smoothly with you, and that you are henceforth never to have any more troubles, you will be bitterly disappointed when the thorns and thistles begin to spring up; but expect them, look forward to them, and then, when they do come, half of their sting will be gone. You will say, "Well, when I took this farm, I knew that thorns and thistles would spring up, I calculated upon seeing them. Now that they have come up, to be forewarned is in a great measure to be forearmed; I shall not sit down and weep with bitter disappointment, for what I suffer is no more than I expected."

In the next place, the knowledge of this fact *will awaken gratitude*. If you have not a little lot of thorns and thistles, be thankful that you have not; and if you are saying to yourself, "Well, I trust that I am a Christian, but really I have not any very great trouble; I seem to sail on a mill-pond, everything goes smoothly with me," thank God for it. It should tend to make you grateful if there is no bitter in

your cup, when you might have expected that there would be. Then drink the sweet with gratitude, and pour out a portion for the poor, and have sympathy with others who are not as favoured in this respect as you are. This fact should arouse your gratitude.

In the next place, being forewarned that there will be thorns and thistles, *should brace up your soul to expect them.* The finest men in all the world are not to be found in the warm, genial climates, where the earth has only to be tickled with a hoe, and it laughs with plenty; but the strongest and the most enterprising spirits have been found at the back of the north wind, where there are frosts and ice, and long, dreary winters, and men have a hard struggle for a livelihood. They become really men under that stern training. Now, if there were no thorns and thistles, no struggles and no trials, should we have any brave Christians? Should we have any great and noble souls at all? When did the Church yield her best men for her Lord's service? It was in the persecuting times, when they had to swim through seas of blood to hold fast the truth of Christ. These are silken days, and we have wretched specimens of Christians everywhere; but if the times of persecution were to come once more, with the rough winds blowing, and the whole sea of the world tossed in tempest, we should then find brave sailors who would put the ship's head to the wind, and ride safely over the stormy billows in the name of the Eternal God. It is, perhaps, the worst thing that can happen to us to be without any kind of trouble. We do not grow in grace very quickly without trial, and we do not then develop the graces of the Spirit as we do when God sends the thorns and thistles to grow up around us.

Further, dear friends, the knowledge that we may expect the thorns and the thistles *should prevent our clinging to this world.* I should not want to stop here always, when all that I have as a warranty of this farm is this, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee." There is a land—

> "Where everlasting spring abides,
> And never-withering flowers."

Oh, let my heart be set upon the world to come! Let me cheer my soul with the prospect of being for ever with the Lord, where nothing can distress or annoy my glorified spirit for ever. The Lord does not mean believers to be satisfied with this world. If you are his child, however fair your portion here, he means you to be always restless until you rest in him, and never to be fully satisfied until you wake up in his likeness. Wherefore, be thankful for the thorns and thistles, which keep you from being in love with this world, and becoming an idolater, as so many of your fellow-men are.

Does not the Lord intend by these trials and troubles to bring us to *seek after higher things?* Brethren, are there not many men, who would have been themselves lost, if they had not lost their all? I talked with one, the other day, who said to me, "I never saw until I lost my eyes." Another said to me, as I noticed that he had lost a leg, "Ah, sir, it was the loss of that leg that made me think, and brought me to my Saviour's feet!" Some of you cannot go to heaven with all your possessions, and with all your prosperity. It will be

necessary to have these things cut away. You are like a ship that is going down through overloading, and you will have to be unloaded that you may float: and blessed is that hand of God which does unload you of many an earthly joy, that you may find your all in the world to come! Affliction is God's black dog that he sends after wandering sheep to bring them back to the fold. If that dog is after anyone here to-night, I pray you hie away to the Shepherd. Do not begin fighting the dog, and trying to struggle with him; for you will get nothing by that, but run away to the Shepherd. One of these days you will be glad of all the rough treatment that the black dog gave you in the day of your tribulation. Thorns and thistles shall the earth bring forth to thee; but if these bring thee nearer to thy God, they are the best crop the ground can grow. Remember what we sang just now,—

> "God in Israel sows the seeds
> Of affliction, pain, and toil;
> These spring up and choke the weeds
> Which would else o'erspread the soil:
> Trials make the promise sweet;
> Trials give new life to prayer;
> Trials bring me to his feet,
> Lay me low and keep me there."

Once more, these thorns and thistles *should make us look to Christ to change all things around us.* The world will always go on bringing forth thorns and thistles until HE comes; and when he comes, our glory and delight, then "instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." Only his grace and his own glorious presence can change this visible creation, as it shall be changed, when "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock." We look for that happy transformation; but as for moral transformations, they take place every day where Jesus comes. He constantly turns thorns and thistles into fir trees and myrtle trees. He makes what was our sorrow to become the base of sweet content, and out of all our griefs we gather gladness, blessed be his name!

If any of you say that this is a dreary subject, I want you to remember how much more dreary it was to him than it ever can be to you, for when he was crowned on earth, the only crown he ever wore was a crown of thorns. This curse of the earth was on his head, and wounded him full sore. Was he crowned with thorns, and do you wonder that they grow up around your feet? Rather bless him that ever he should have consecrated the thorns by wearing them for his diadem. Be willing to wear the thorn-crown, too; and if that be not given you to prick your temples, and to make every thought an agony, be satisfied to go on treading a thorny path, for your Lord has been that way before. The day shall come when all these thorns will make us sing more sweetly. The special music of some of the redeemed is due to their special trials.

> "The deeper their sorrows, the louder they'll sing."

The transports of heaven will reach a height in those who have

passed through great afflictions which they cannot attain otherwise. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." Wherefore, be not sorry that the earth shall bring forth thorns and thistles to you, for without these you could not come through these great tribulations, and enter into so great and glorious a rest.

I have ended sooner, because of the baptism which is to follow; but I would to God that some of you here, who have no portion in the world to come, would lay my text to heart. So you have come to London, young man, and you attend the theatre, and music-halls, and so on! Well, they will bring forth thorns and thistles to you. That is the kind of ground where they grow very large, and with very sharp thorns on them. Oh, but you, my young friend, do not go to such places, you are getting on nicely in business! Yes, but you have no guarantee that it will always be so. Thorns and thistles will it bring forth to you, as well as to others; and suppose that you should prosper; suppose that you should make £10,000; suppose that you should make much more than that. Do you not know that, with all that, there will come great care, and that, after all, there is no satisfaction in it, and that when all that makes success in life is summed up, apart from laying hold of eternal things, it is all nothing but smoke. Thorns and thistles for dying beds are often made out of riches. There are more thorns and thistles to the rich than to the poor when they come to die, if they have lived an ill-spent life. Oh, sirs, if you could have all the world, it would only be a bigger plot of thorns and thistles for you without Christ; but if you get him, if Jesus be your portion, then if your trials should be heaped up as high as heaven, you would not mind, for Christ would come, and be with you in the worst of them; and you would still rejoice and glory in tribulation also, and your tribulation would work in you patience, and patience experience, and that experience would work in you the likeness of Christ, and so bring you nearer heaven!

It matters not to the believer what form his life may take when once Christ has become his life, and it will not matter much to you who are not saved what form your life takes if you continue without the Saviour; it will be death all the same, and it will land you in eternal death. Oh, God, grant that we may never settle down upon this thistle-plot, and try to make it to be our heritage; but may we find our portion in the Lord Jesus Christ! I wish all of you that blessing, for his name's sake. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

GENESIS III.

Verse 1. *Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the* LORD *God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?*

He began with a question. How much of evil begins with questioning! The serpent does not dare to state a lie, but he suggests one: "Has God refused you all the fruit of these many trees that grow in the garden?"

2, 3. *And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.*

Eve had begun to feel the fascination of the evil one, for she softened down the word of God. The Lord had said concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. A little of the spirit of doubt had crept into Eve's mind, so she answered, God hath said, "Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, *lest* ye die."

4, 5. *And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.*

The serpent insinuated that God selfishly kept them back from the tree, lest they should grow too wise, and become like God himself. The evil one suggested ambition to the woman's mind, and imputed wicked designs to the ever-blessed and holy God. He did not say any more; the devil is too wise to use many words. I am afraid that the servants of God sometimes weaken the force of the truth by their verbosity, but not so did the serpent when he craftily suggested falsehoods to Mother Eve; he said enough to accomplish his evil purpose, but no more.

6. *And when the woman saw—*

Sin came into the human race by the eye; and that is the way that Christ comes in, by the eye of faith, the spiritual eye. "Look unto me, and be ye saved," is the counterpart of this word, "When the woman saw"—

6. *That the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.*

This was a distinct act of rebellion on the part of both of them. It may seem a small thing; but it meant a great deal. They had cast off their allegiance to God; they had set up on their own account; they thought they knew better than God, and they imagined they were going to be gods themselves.

7. *And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.*

All they had gained by their sin was a discovery of their nakedness. Poor creatures, how the serpent laughed as his words were fulfilled, "your eyes shall be opened"! They were opened, indeed; and Adam and Eve did know good and evil. Little could they have dreamed in what a terrible sense the serpent's words would come true.

8. *And they heard the voice of the* LORD *God walking in the garden in the cool of the day:*

No doubt, when they had heard the voice of the Lord before, they had

run to meet him, as children do to a father when he comes home "in the cool of the day." But now, how different is their action!

8. *And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the* LORD *God amongst the trees of the garden.*

What fools they were to think that they could hide themselves from God! The fig leaves were to hide their nakedness, and now the trees themselves were to hide them from God.

9—11. *And the* LORD *God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?*

God comes to judge his fallen creature, yet he deals kindly with him. The Lord will have it from his own lips that he has offended; he summons no other witness.

12. *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.*

This is a clear proof of his guilt, first, that he throws the blame on her whom he was bound to love and shield; and next, that he throws the blame on God himself: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree." Ah, me, what mean creatures men are when sin comes in, and shame follows at its heels!

13. *And the* LORD *God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.*

How often we throw the blame of our sin on the devil, who certainly has enough to bear without the added guilt of our iniquity! What Eve said was true; but it was not a sufficient reason for her sin. She should not have been beguiled by the serpent.

14, 15. *And the* LORD *God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

Here was the first proclamation of the gospel. Strange to say, while God pronounces a curse upon the enemy of mankind, he is uttering a blessing upon the whole of those who belong to Christ, for HE is that seed of the woman, and all that belong to him are a simple-minded, child-like people, children of the woman. Their opponents are the seed of the serpent, crafty, cunning, wise, full of deceit; and there is enmity between these two seeds. Christ is the Head of the one seed, and Satan is the head of the other; and our Lord Jesus Christ has had his heel bruised, and he suffered in that bruising of his heel; but he has broken the head of the dragon, he has crushed the power of evil, he has put his potent foot upon the old serpent's head.

16—18. *Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;*

He had been accustomed to eat of the fruit of the many trees of paradise; now he must come down, and eat "the herb of the field." He is lowered from royal dainties to commoner fare.

19. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground;*

"Thou shalt get thy life out of the ground till thou thyself shalt go into the ground."

19—21. *For out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the* LORD *God make coats of skins, and clothed them.*

This was a very significant gospel action. The Lord took away from Adam and Eve the withered fig-leaves; but put on them the skins of animals, to show, in symbol, that we are covered with the sacrifice of Christ. The giving up of a life yielded a better covering than the growth of nature; and so to-day the death of Christ yields us a better covering than we could ever find in anything that grew of our poor fallen nature. Blessed be God for thus thinking of us when providing raiment for our first parents!

22. *And the* LORD *God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:*

That would have been a horrible thing, for man to be incapable of death, and so to continue for ever in a sinful world. It is by passing through death that we come out into the realm of perfectness.

23, 24. *Therefore the* LORD *God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.*

"O, what a fall was there, my countrymen,
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down;"

while sin triumphed over us; yet even the fall by Adam's sin was not without the promise of a gracious recovery through the last Adam, the Lord from heaven. Well does Dr. Watts set forth the contrast between the fall of the angels and the fall of man,—

"Down headlong from their native skies
The rebel angels fell,
And thunderbolts of flaming wrath
Pursued them deep to hell.

"Down from the top of earthly bliss
Rebellious man was hurl'd;
And Jesus stoop'd beneath the grave
To reach a sinking world."

He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took our nature, and died in our stead. May we trust to his death to bring us life, and thereby be saved from the consequences of the fall!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—757, 750, 749.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN A SINGLE VERSE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MARCH 19TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, February 28th, 1889.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."—1 Timothy i. 15.

I SPOKE, yesterday, with a brother minister, who had been a pastor in America, and I asked him why he was so anxious to go back again where the climate had so greatly tried him. He answered, "I love the people to whom I preach." "What sort of people are they?" I enquired. "Well," he replied, "they are a people who come together anxious to get good. They do not try to find fault with me; but they seek to get all the good they can out of the gospel I preach." "Well," I said, "it is worth while crossing the ocean to go to a congregation of that sort of people." You know, dear friends, how it is with some people, as it was with one friend to whom I spoke last Tuesday. God had blessed the Word to his soul, and he was converted; but he had been hearing me some time before, and I said to him, "How was it, do you think, that during those other years that you came here you did not find the Saviour?" "Oh, sir!" he answered, "I am afraid it was because I came to hear you, and when I had been here, and heard you, I was quite satisfied. But when God taught me to come here to look for Christ, and to seek eternal life, then I obtained the blessing." Now, will you who are here to-night, specially you who are not saved, try to hear me in that fashion, not noticing how I preach, because I do not care much about that myself, and you need to care about it far less, but only to think what good can be got out of it. Let each hearer ask himself, "Is there anything of saving benefit to my soul in what the preacher will say to-night?"

Now, this text contains the gospel in brief, and yet I may say that it contains the gospel in full. If you get condensed notes of a sermon or a speech, you often miss the very soul and marrow of it; but here you get all the condensation possible, as if the great truths of the

gospel were pressed together by a hydraulic ram, and yet there is not a particle of it left out. It is one of the "little Bibles", as Luther used to call them; the gospel in a verse, the essence of the whole Bible is here: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."

I. Now I am going to be short upon each point, and therefore I shall at once speak upon this first head. Here is OUR NAME, OR A BROAD WORD OF DESCRIPTION: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." One of the most important questions that can be asked by any man is this, For whom is salvation meant? The answer we have is given by the Holy Ghost, in the inspired Word of God: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Jesus Christ came to save *sinners of all sorts*. So long as you can come under the general description "sinners", it matters not what shape your sin has taken. All men have alike sinned, and yet all have not sinned in the same way. They have all wandered the downward road, and yet each one has gone a different way from all the rest. Christ Jesus came into the world to save respectable sinners and disreputable sinners. He came into the world to save proud sinners and despairing sinners. He came into the world to save drunkards, thieves, liars, whoremongers, adulterers, murderers, and such like. Whatever sort of sin there is, this word is wonderfully comprehensive and sweeping, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*." A black lot, a horrible crew, they are, and hell is their due reward; but these are the people Jesus came to save. If there be any people in the world who are not sinners, Jesus did not come to save them, because such people did not want any Saviour. If there be any of you who venture to say that you have never sinned, well then, you need not listen to me, for I have nothing to say to you, nor has this Book of God, except to tell you that you are under a grievous error, and a great delusion. There can be no mercy to a man who has committed no fault. Some time ago, there was a man transported for life for an offence he never committed; and, when it was found out that he was not guilty, Her Majesty insulted him, I think, by giving him "a free pardon." Why, he had never committed the crime for which he had suffered, poor soul, and he had been a year at least in confinement as a felon, though he was innocent! I think Her Majesty should have begged his pardon, and given him large compensation. Pardon and mercy are not for innocent people, they are for the guilty; and the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, came into the world, not to save the innocent, the righteous, and the good, but to save sinners.

Notice, next, that Jesus came to save *sinners without any other qualification*. There is a habit which some have of qualifying the word sinner, as we have it in the hymn,—

> "Come, *humble* sinner, in whose breast,"

and so on. I think the writer of that hymn put it—

> "Come, *trembling* sinner, in whose breast
> A thousand thoughts revolve."

But when Jesus Christ invites sinners, he does it after this fashion, "Come, sinners." "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." There is no adjective before the noun. There is no sort of qualification except that they are sinners. Christ Jesus came to save hardened sinners, for he softens the heart. He came to save aggravated sinners, for he breaks the iron sinew of the neck, and subdues the stubborn will. He came to save sinners who have no good thing in them. "If you have any merit," said one to another, "if you have any good thing about you, it is like a drop of rose water in a sea of filth." But, truly, there is not even that one drop of rose water in our nature; nor need there be in order that Christ may save us. He came to save sinners: that is all Paul says. I dare not limit what is left unlimited; I dare not qualify what is left unqualified. "Sinners": that is all the apostle says. What! if they have no trace of goodness, no mark of anything excellent? Yes. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

This means, also, that Christ Jesus came to save *sinners in their pollution.* Remember that sin is a very offensive thing. When conscience is really awakened to discover the pollution of sin, it is seen to be exceeding sinful, a thing that is truly horrible. We are taught, in the Scriptures, even to hate the garments spotted by the flesh; and there is such a thing as a righteous indignation against sin; but the Lord Jesus Christ has come into the world to save the polluted, to save those against whom virtue gives her vote, to save those whom society expels. What a wonderful thing "society" is, itself rotten to the core very often; and yet, if there happens to be a poor woman who has gone astray, "society" cries, "Put her out! Drive the wretched creature away from us." I have known one such turned out of hotel after hotel. They could not bear their righteous selves to come anywhere near to one who had in the least degree broken the laws of society; yet it was not so with Christ. Notwithstanding all his sense of the horror of sin, and it is much greater than our sense of it, for his mind is sensitive because of its supreme purity, yet, notwithstanding that, he came into the world to save sinners, and with sinners he mixed, even with publicans and harlots. With sinners he sat at meat; with sinners he lived; with sinners he died; he made his grave with the wicked; he entered paradise with a thief; and to-day, those who sing the new song in heaven confess that they were sinners, for they say, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." Yes, notwithstanding the pollution of sin, Christ came to save sinners.

He came also to save *sinners under the curse.* Sin is a cursed thing. God has never blessed sin, and he never will do so. Though sin may seem to flourish for a time, the blight of the Almighty is upon it; the breath of the great Judge of all will wither up everything that grows of evil. He cannot bear it; his fire shall burn, even to the lowest hell, against all iniquity; and yet, though you are under the curse, Jesus Christ came into the world to save the accursed sinner by taking the curse upon himself, and himself hanging on the tree of the curse, and bearing the curse for us, that we might be saved. Do you feel the

curse of God in your spirit to-night? Does it seem to dry up all the springs of your life? Then remember, notwithstanding that, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

Once more, Christ came to save *sinners without strength.* Sin brings death. Wherever sin reigns, the power to do good dies out. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." But when you are without strength, ah, even without strength to believe on him, without strength to feel your sin, without strength to feel even a desire to be better, even then it is true that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I know he did, for the first good desires are his gift; the first prayers are his own breath; the first sigh under the burden of sin is his own work. Jesus does it all. He came into the world to save us. "When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly," those in whom there could not be any trace of goodness; "the ungodly", those who were without God and without hope in the world. It is for such that Jesus Christ came into the world. I do not know how to set this gate open wider; I will take it right off its hinges, and I will pull up post and bar and all; and defy the very devils of hell to come and shut this city of refuge against any soul here that is a sinner. If you have sinned, behold, the voice of everlasting love speaks aloud to you to-night these words, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

II. I must not dwell long on any one word in our text, so I pass to another. In the second place, here is, OUR NEED, OR A WIDE WORD OF SALVATION. We poor sinners need saving, and "Christ Jesus came into the world to *save* sinners."

Jesus came to save. *He did not come to condemn us.* When God came down upon earth, it might have been thought that he must have come to condemn; for when he came down to look at the tower of Babel, and saw the sin of the world, he scattered the sinners upon the face of all the earth. Now, it might be thought that, if he came on earth, he would be shocked and horrified by a personal investigation of sin, and then would say, "I will destroy the world." But Jesus said, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." If you get condemnation out of the gospel, you put the condemnation into it yourselves. It is not the gospel, but your rejection of it, that will condemn you. Therefore, I pray God that you may never put from you the Word of God, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, as they did to whom Paul and Barnabas preached at Antioch.

But, next, Christ did not come into the world *to help us to save ourselves.* He came to save us; not to set us on our legs, and say, "Now you do so much, and I will do the rest." No, he came to save us. From top to bottom salvation is all of grace, and all the gift of God by Jesus Christ. He did not come into the world, I say, to make us salvable, but to save us; nor to put us in the way of somehow or other meriting salvation; but he came himself to be the Saviour, and to save sinners. Cannot you see that you, who have been trying to spin a robe of

righteousness, get all that you do in the day unravelled before night? You who have been knitting part of a garment to cover your nakedness, put your knitting-pins down, and take what Christ has finished. Come, you who have been working hard, like prisoners on a tread-mill, trying to get to heaven that way, you never will do it. See another ladder, like that which Jacob saw of old, that reaches from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven; and may God enable you to climb to him that way, but not by a way of your own! Jesus did not come to help us to save ourselves.

And he did not come *to save us in part*, that we might do the rest. It takes a long time to make some men know this. I know numbers of Christian people, who still have one foot on the rock, and the other foot on the sand. There is a certain, or rather, uncertain doctrine that always makes people feel unsafe. It is that you must not say that you are saved; but that if you hold on your way, and keep on the right road, then, perhaps, when you come to die, you may begin to hope that you are saved. I would not give twopence for such a gospel as that. We want salvation given to us outright, and given to us for ever; and this is what Christ does give us when we come and trust in him. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." He is saved, there and then, by the act of God. "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He did not come to save us in part.

And the Lord Jesus Christ has not come *to make us content to be unsaved.* I have sometimes heard people talk to the unconverted like this, "Now, you must wait. You must wait. You cannot do anything; therefore, sit still, and wait until something happens to you." That is not the gospel. The gospel is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Read the Bible through, and learn what God has there revealed. Lay aside your own system and notion. You will not find that the Lord Jesus Christ said to the man at Bethesda, "Now, lie at the pool till the angel comes and stirs it." That is old Judaism that does that; but Jesus said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." When Jesus speaks to sinners like that, they do rise, and take up their beds and walk. Somebody says, "But you, poor minister that you are, cannot tell men to take up their beds and walk, and make them do it." Yes, we can, when our Master speaks through us, and when we deliver the Lord's message in faith, resting on the power of the Holy Ghost. We still can be used by the Lord to work miracles. The dry bones are made to hear the voice of the Lord's servant when the Holy Ghost goes with the voice, and they are quickened by divine power.

> "The gospel bids the dead revive,
> Sinners obey the voice and live;
> Dry bones are raised, and clothed afresh,
> And hearts of stone are turn'd to flesh."

Again, I say, Jesus did not come to make sinners contented to be lost, or to sit down and wait as if salvation did not concern them; nay, but he came to save sinners.

Well, what does it mean, that Christ Jesus came into the world to

save sinners? It means that he came *to save them from the punishment of their sin*. Their sin shall not be laid to their charge so that they shall be condemned for it. That is one thing. He came, also, to save them from the *pollution of their sin*, so that, though their mind has been debased, and their taste degraded, and their conscience deadened by sin, he came to take that evil away, and give them a tender heart, and a hatred of sin, and a love for holiness, and a desire for purity. But Jesus came to do more than that. He came to take away our *tendencies to sin*, tendencies which are born in us, and grow with us. He came by his Spirit to eradicate them, to pluck them up by the roots, to put within us another principle, which shall fight with the old principle of sin, and overcome it, till Christ alone shall reign, and every thought shall be brought into captivity to him. He came to save his people from *apostasy*. He came into the world to save sinners by keeping them faithful to the end, so that they shall not go back unto perdition.

"Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven."

A very important part of the work of grace is this. To start a man right, is but little; but to keep that man holding on even to the end, this is a triumph of Almighty grace, and this is what Christ has come to do. Jesus came into the world, not to half save you, not to save you in this direction or that, and in this light or that, but to save you from our sin, to save you from an angry temper, to save you from pride, to save you from strong drink, to save you from covetousness, to save you from every evil thing, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. This is a grand word, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Oh, that you might believe it! I pray God that out of this congregation, which is wonderfully large for such a night, and yet small compared with our usual number on a Thursday evening, there may be very many who will say, "Yes, I believe that Jesus came to save sinners, and I trust him to save me." You will be saved the moment that you do that, for faith is the mark of his salvation, the proof that he has saved you.

III. But now, thirdly, there is a name here. We have had our own name, sinners; now here is HIS NAME, OR A GLORIOUS WORD OF HONOUR: "*Christ Jesus* came into the world to save sinners," Christ Jesus; not an angel, not the best of men; but Christ Jesus.

"Christ" means, as you know, *anointed;* that is, God sent him, anointed by his own Spirit, prepared, fitted, qualified, and endowed for the work of saving. Jesus comes, not without an anointing from God. He is not an amateur Saviour, come on his own account, without any commission or authority, but God has anointed him in order that he may save sinners. When he went into the synagogue at Nazareth, on the Sabbath-day, he applied to himself the words of the prophet Esaias, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight

to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

The other part of his name is "Jesus", that is, *Saviour*. He has come, therefore, to be the anointed Saviour, commissioned to be a Saviour; and if he is not a Saviour (I say it with all reverence), he is nothing. He came into the world to save; and if he does not save, he has missed his mark. He laid his heavenly glories down to take this still higher glory, that he might be the Saviour of sinners. The angels sang concerning him, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." And the angel of the Lord said to Joseph: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Beloved, do notice this: the Saviour of sinners is not the Virgin Mary, saints and saintesses are not saviours; but "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, "very God of very God," the Creator of all things, sustaining all things by the word of his power. He came into the world, to Bethlehem's manger, and afterwards to Calvary's cross, with this as his one business, that he might save sinners. Is he not able to save? Is he not just the Saviour that we need? God and yet man in one Person, he is able to sympathize because he is man, and he is able to save because he is God! Blessed God-man, Jesus Christ, thou art able to save me!

I cannot dwell longer on that part of my theme; but I wish that you who are seeking salvation would let your thoughts dwell upon it until you truly trusted him as your Saviour.

IV. The fourth thing in the text is HIS DEED, OR A SURE WORD OF FACT. "Christ Jesus *came* into the world." We have not to look to what he will do to save sinners, for he has done it.

He came into the world. *He existed long before* he came out of heaven into this world. He was in the beginning with God, and he came here. You and I began our existence here; but he existed from the beginning, in the glory of the Father, and in the fulness of time he came into the world.

He came willingly. It is put so in our text: "Christ Jesus *came* into the world." There is a kind of voluntariness evident in the words. He was sent, for he is the Christ, the Messias; but he came of his own free-will.

> "Down from the shining seats above,
> With joyful haste he fled."

He came into the world. I say again, the salvation of sinners is not a thing to be accomplished in the future. If God had promised it, we might trust as Abraham did, when he saw Christ's day afar off, and was glad; but Jesus *has come;* he has been here, God Almighty has been here in human form, dwelling among men. He came into the world to save sinners.

He came into the world so far that he knew the world's griefs and bore them, the world's penalty, the world's shame and reproach, the world's sickness, and the world's death. He came into the world, into the very centre and heart of this ungodly world, and there he dwelt, "holy, harmless, and undefiled."

Christ Jesus came into the world; and when he came here, it was such a wonderful coming that *he stayed here.* Some three and thirty years he was here; and all that while he was still seeking to save sinners. During the last three years he went about doing good, always hunting up sinners; and at the end of his service for sinners he stretched out his hands and feet, and yielded up himself to die for sinners. He breathed out his very soul for sinners. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."

I do not feel that I have any need to find any words of mine to try to garnish this gospel of the glory of the blessed God. It is the greatest theme on which a man ever spoke; it wants no oratory to set it forth. The story itself is marvellous, "the old, old story, of Jesus and his love." God could not in justice pass over human sin without an atonement; but he made the atonement himself. Jesus, who is one with the Father, came here, and offered himself as a sacrifice that he might save sinners. Now, *if he does not save sinners, his coming here is a failure.* Do you believe, can you imagine, that Christ's coming into the world could be a failure? In my very soul I believe that all he meant to accomplish by his coming here he will accomplish, that no man shall ever be able to point to any failure in this grandest of divine enterprises. There is no failure in Creation; there will be no failure in Providence; and when the whole story is ended, there will be no failure in this great work of Redemption. "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and sinners shall be saved. Will *you* be among them, my dear hearer? Why should you not be among them?

V. Once more. We have here, in the fifth place, OUR ACCEPTANCE, OR A WORD OF PERSONALITY. The apostle says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, *of whom I am chief.*" I am not going to dispute with the apostle; and yet if he were here, I should be a little dubious as to his right to the title of "chief of sinners", and I would ask him whether, if he were chief, I was not the next. I suppose that there are many here who would say, "Paul sinned no more grievously than we did before our conversion." I remember, in preaching once, I said that, if I ever got to heaven, those lines would be true of me,—

> "Then loudest of the crowd I'll sing,
> While heaven's resounding mansions ring,
> With shouts of sovereign grace."

When I had done preaching, a lady met me in the aisle, and she said, "You made one mistake in your sermon." "Oh, dear heart!" I replied, "I daresay I made twenty." She said, "But the one you made was this. You said that you would sing the loudest when you got to heaven; but you will not. When I get there, I shall owe more to the grace of God than you will; you have not been such a sinner as I have been." Well, I found all the other saints around us were of a mind to contest about which should praise God most because of the great things he had done for them in saving their souls. Ralph Erskine wrote a hymn about the contention amongst the birds of paradise as to which should praise God best, and he describes the

different kinds of people in heaven all vieing with each other in magnifying the name of the Lord who had redeemed them. But that is not my theme just now.

When we come and appropriate this sinner's Saviour, we do it, first, by a *confession*. "Lord, I am a sinner. I know it. I mourn over it. I confess to thee that I have broken thy righteous law." Then there follows, on that confession, a sense of *humiliation*. Did Jesus come into the world to save me? Then I am a greater sinner than I thought I was; first, that I should need the Son of God to save me; and, next, that I should sin against love so amazing, so surprising, as to rebel against one who would come into the world to save me. The more we appreciate Christ's saving sinners, the more we depreciate ourselves. He who has a great Saviour will feel himself to be a great sinner; and he who has the best and clearest view of Christ is the man who will say, "Of whom—namely, of the saved sinners—I am chief."

Now, this appropriation of Christ, which began with confession, and went on to deep self-humiliation, flowers into *faith*, because, notice, the apostle says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." Though he says that he is chief of them, yet he means also, "I am one of those he came to save." "Of whom I am chief." "Oh, yes, I am one of those he came to save!" Faith enables the soul to say that. My dear friends, I do trust that, by the grace of God, many of you will say that to-night. "Lord Jesus, I trust in thee. Of the multitude that thou didst come to save, who are described as sinners, I am one."

This appropriation of Christ by faith will go on to *open confession* of him. The apostle does confess that, while he was the chief of sinners, yet Christ died for him; and you will be led to make that confession. I hope that you will do it as our friends are going to do it to-night, by obedience to Christ's law in baptism, as he bids you. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved."

One thing I notice about my text which greatly delights me. Paul says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom *I am chief*." No, no, Paul; that expression will not do. Why, my dear man, you are a scholar; and yet you have made a mistake in the tense of the verb! It is not *sum*, I am, but *fui*, I was. "No, no," says Paul; "never bring your Latin in here. My Greek expression is, '*I am* chief.'" "What? After being saved, after being forgiven, still are you chief of sinners?" "Yes," he says, "it is so;" and it is possible for a man to be not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, and yet to feel that, in putting his whole life together, he has to take his place among the sinners, ay, at the head of them, as the chief of sinners.

I think I told you that I once tried the plan, which some of our brethren try, of praying to God as a saint. Why, I have seen some of our brethren, when they have had a Sunday out, with their best go-to-meeting clothes on, talk about their being perfect, and they looked exactly like the peacock I saw with his tail spread out, strutting along so grandly! Well, I rather liked the look of that fine show, there was something very beautiful in it; so I tried it myself once. I went to God in prayer boasting about my virtues, and my attainments,

and my growth in grace, and my service for him. I trow that I have as good a right to do that as anybody else has. I have served God with all my might, and I have laid everything at his feet. But when I tried to pray that way, I knocked at the gate, and nobody came. I knocked again, but nobody came. There is a little wicket, you know, that they open, just to look out to see who is there. So they asked, "Who is that knocking?" I answered, "Oh, it is a saint! It is one who has grown in grace until he is perfectly sanctified, one who has preached the gospel for many years." They just shut the gate at once; they did not know anything about me in that capacity; so I stood there, and got nothing. At last, broken-hearted and full of grief, I knocked again with all my might, and when they asked, "Who is there?" I said, "Here is a poor sinner, who has often come to Christ in that capacity, and has taken him to be his whole righteousness and salvation, and he has come again just as he used to come." "Ah!" they said, "it is you, is it? We have known you for many years; you are always welcome." I found that I had access to my God when I said, "I am the chief of sinners. I am a sinner still."

Well, now, putting myself in that position, where I always must be, and always hope to be, I would say to any sinner here, whoever you may be, come, friend, come along with me to the cross. One says, "But I cannot go with you; you have been a minister of the gospel these thirty years and more." My dear friend, I am a poor sinner still; and I have to look to Christ every day as I did at the very first. Come along with me. Come along with me. It is many, many years since, on a snowy morning, I looked to him, and was lightened. I wish that, this snowy night, some soul here would look to him and live.

I had much more to say, but the time has gone, so I just leave with you my text, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is a blessed proverb; an apostolic proverbial saying; but it is a true saying: "It is a faithful saying." Everybody who has tried it has found it true. It is worthy of the acceptation of you all, and it is worthy of all the acceptation that any one of you can give to it. You may come, and trust your soul on it, for time and for eternity. You may come with all your burden of sin upon your shoulders. You may come with all your want of feeling, with all your hardness of heart, and just take as your Saviour this Jesus Christ, who came into the world to save sinners. Only trust him; and when you have trusted him, you have done much more than you dream. Some people think that there is nothing in faith; but God is pleased with it, and "without faith it is impossible to please God." If God is pleased with it, there is a great deal more in it than some imagine. That faith contains within itself a future life of holiness. It is the one acorn out of which countless forests will yet grow. Believe thou! May the Lord help thee to believe in Jesus immediately! Ere thou leavest this place, trust him! Trust him wholly. He came to save sinners. Let him save you. It is his business; it is not yours. Leave yourself in his hands, and he will save you, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 TIMOTHY I. 1—17.

Verse 1. *Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope;*

Christ is our hope; we have not a shadow of a hope apart from him. I remember, when on the Continent, seeing on a cross the words "*Spes unica*," the unique, the only hope of man; and that is true of the cross of Christ, and of Christ who suffered on it, he is our hope.

2. *Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Notice the apostle's triple salutation, "Grace, mercy, and peace." Whenever Paul writes to a church, he wishes "grace and peace"; but to a minister he wishes "grace, mercy, and peace." Ah! we want mercy more than the average of Christians; we have greater responsibilities; and, consequently, might more readily fall into greater sin, so to a minister Paul's salutation is, "grace, mercy, and peace."

3, 4. *As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do.*

You see, the apostle, in his day, had to contend against those who ran away from the simplicity of the gospel into all manner of fables and inventions. Such, in our day, are the doctrine of evolution, the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, the doctrine of post-mortem salvation, the doctrine of the final restitution of all men, and all sorts of fables and falsehoods which men have invented.

5—7. *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.*

There were some who put the law into its wrong place. They made it a way of salvation, which it never was meant to be, and never can be. It is a way of conviction. It is an instrument of humbling. It shows us the evil of sin; but it never takes sin away.

8. *But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully;*

In its own place it has its own uses, and these are most important.

9—13. *Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine; according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer,*

Paul must have written this verse with many tears. What a wonder of grace it was that he should be put into the sacred ministry, to bear testimony for Christ, when he had been before a blasphemer!

13. *And a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*

He almost thought that, if he had done all this wilfully, he might not have been forgiven; but he felt that here God spied out the only extenuating

circumstance, namely, that he was mistaken: "I did it ignorantly, in unbelief."

14, 15. *And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

He spoke from his heart, from deep experience. This indeed was to him the glorious gospel of the blessed God, that had saved him, the very chief of sinners. He could therefore with confidence commend it to others as worthy of all acceptation.

16. *Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.*

The case of Paul is not a singular one; it is the pattern one. If there are any here who feel that they have sinned like Saul of Tarsus, they may be forgiven like Paul the apostle. He is a pattern to all who should hereafter believe in Christ to life everlasting. Just as we often see things cut out in brown paper, and sold as patterns, so is the apostle Paul the pattern convert. What God did for him, he can do for thousands of others.

17. *Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Paul could not help this outburst of praise. He must put in a doxology. When he remembered his own conversion and pardon, and his being entrusted with the ministry of the gospel, he was obliged to put down his pen, and lift up his voice in grateful thanksgiving to God. So may it be with us, as we remember what great things the Lord hath done for us!

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A Sermon

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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, April 4th, 1889.

"So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."—Exodus xv. 22—26.

AFTER I had fallen down at Mentone, and was grievously ill, a brother in Christ called upon me, and said, "My dear friend, you have now come to Marah." I replied, "Yes, and the waters are bitter." He then said, "But Marah is better than Elim, for in Elim the Israelites only drank of the water and ate of the fruit of the palm trees, and that was soon over; but at Marah we read that God 'made for them a statute and an ordinance,' and that was never over. That statute and ordinance stood fast, and will stand fast for Israel as long as they are a nation. There is much more benefit to be reaped from Marah than from Elim." I thanked my friend for that good word. I had found it true aforetime; I have found it true since then; and you and I, if we are indeed the people of God, will find it true to the end, that Marah, though it be bitter, is also better; and albeit that we do not like it, yet in the end there shall be no bitterness in it, but an unutterable sweetness which shall be ours through time and eternity.

We have a long record about Marah, have we not? I have read you four verses concerning Marah. How many verses have we about Elim? Only one. Does Marah deserve to be talked about four times as much as Elim? Perhaps it does; perhaps there is four times as much fruit to be obtained from the bitter waters of Marah than from the twelve springs of water, and threescore and ten palm trees at Elim. Who knows? This I know, however, that we are very apt to talk more about our

bitters than about our sweets; and that is a serious fault. It were well if we had fewer murmuring words for our sorrows, and more songs of thanksgiving for our blessings. Yet Holy Writ seems here to speak after the manner of men, and to let us have the four verses for the trial, and the one verse for the delight. Still, as it speaks also after the manner of God, I gather that Marah is, after all, more noteworthy than Elim; and truly, there does come to God's people something better out of their troubles than out of their joys.

Certainly one thing is clear, Israel had no miracle at Elim. Wells and palm trees they had; but they had no miracle there, no miraculous change of the bitter into the sweet; and they had no statute, and no ordinance, and no promise, and no new revelation of God, and no new name for Jehovah there. All that belonged to Marah, "for there he made them a statute and an ordinance," and there he promised, if they were faithful and obedient, that he would put none of the diseases of Egypt upon them, and there he revealed himself as Jehovah Rophi, "the Lord that healeth thee." Oh, yes, there are many virtues and many blessings in the bitter waters of Marah! Often have we found it true that "Sweet are the uses of adversity."

I hope that nobody here thinks that these Israelites experienced a small trial. We are not accustomed to travelling in the desert; but those who are, tell us that thirst in the wilderness is something awful to endure. For all that great host to go three days without water, must have been a very trying experience. You would not like to try that even in this country; but what must it be to go three days in the wilderness, beneath a burning sky, without a drop of water to drink? Then came the bitter disappointment at Marah. Probably the people knew that there were water-springs ahead, so they hurried up to the place to drink; but when they stooped to taste the waters, they found that they were bitter. They could not drink of them; and there they stood, in their desperation, with the long thirst parching their throats, and bitter disappointment adding to their agony; and they murmured against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" I say not this to excuse them, but lest you should think that they had only a small trial to bear.

Remember, also, that this was a new form of trial. They never lacked for water in Egypt; there were plenty of rivers and canals there, and they could drink as much as they chose. This was an experience to which they were quite unaccustomed, and I should not wonder if they were greatly surprised at it, for they knew that they were the people of God. They had just seen the Lord divide the Red Sea, and drown their enemies; and now has he brought them out of Egypt to let them perish of thirst in the wilderness? They fancied that they were going to have one long triumphant march right into the promised land, or to be always dandled upon the lap of Providence, and indulged in every way, like spoilt children. They must have stood aghast at finding that, when the earth yielded water to slake their thirst, it was such water as they could not drink.

Well, now, this kind of surprise happens to many who have set out on the way to heaven. God has been very gracious to them; their sins are washed away, and they think that the great joy which they

have lately experienced will never be taken away from them, and will never be even diminished. They reckon upon a long day without a cloud. God has favoured them so much that they cannot imagine that they shall have any trial or any bitterness. It is not so, beloved; a Christian man is seldom long at ease, no sooner does he start out on pilgrimage to heaven than he meets with a difficulty, and as he goes on he finds out that the way to heaven is not a rolled pathway, it is up hill and down dale, through the mire and through the slough, over mount and through the sea. It is by their trials and afflictions that the people of God are proved to be his children. They cannot escape the rod, whoever may; yet this experience does at first come as a very great surprise to them, so I want to talk to-night to some who have been lately brought to rejoice in the Lord's pardoning mercy, but are now staggered because they have come to an encampment in the wilderness where their thirsty mouths are filled with bitterness.

I begin my discourse by saying that this experience was a great gain to Israel. Marah, with all its trials, was no loss to them. They made a decided advance in three things through having to endure this trial; they were gainers, first, by *examination;* next, by *experience;* and, thirdly, by *education.*

I. First, Israel's trial at Marah was a gain to them by EXAMINATION. It was to that end that they were brought there, that they might be examined by the Lord: "There he proved them."

Speaking of Israel at Marah, let me say, first, that *they were in a new position.* They were no longer slaves, they were not in Egyptian territory, the Red Sea rolled between them and their former lives, and their former masters; but it is evident from their conduct that they were not altogether a new people. They had brought a great deal of evil out of Egypt with them. When you heard them sing, you said, "It is strange that those poor slaves can sing such a jubilant song. Those women, so accustomed to carry heavy burdens of earth, how merrily they dance! How joyfully they strike the timbrels! Israel has certainly become a new race. What a grand choir they make! What singing is theirs! Who would have dreamt that those who cried by reason of their taskmasters would ever sing like that?" Yes, but when they were tried and tested, it was found that the old stuff was in them still; they murmured just as they had often done before when, in the land of Egypt, they had blamed Moses because their burdens were increased. We, too, have entered quite a new state. Some of you, perhaps, have lately become new creatures in Christ Jesus. Between you and your old sins there rolls a deep, impassable sea; you will never go back to them again. Ah, but do not begin to flatter yourselves that you have left behind you all your old selves! There remaineth still, even in the regenerate, the old lusts of the flesh. They have had their heads broken, but they still live; they have been crucified, their hands and feet are fastened to the wood, crucified with Christ; but they live for all that; and they struggle on the cross, and you must not marvel, if, when you are tried and proved, you find that you are like these Israelites at Marah.

Notice, next, that the trial to which Israel was subjected was *the*

Lord's own test, which is searching and accurate: "He proved them." We sit down, and practise self-examination, which is a very proper thing. Beware, I pray you, of a faith that will not stand self-examination. If you dare not look into your own heart, it must be because there is something rotten there. The tradesman who is afraid to inspect his books, or examine his stock, is going to the bad, rest assured of that. We are bound to examine ourselves very carefully; but, after all, our examinations are very superficial, very partial, and we are very apt to make a mistake. In the case of Israel, the Lord proved them by that thirst in the wilderness, and that great agony on finding that the water they looked for was undrinkable. "He proved them." The Lord may be bringing some of you into deep waters, and great trials, because he is proving you. When the fan is in his hand, then does he throughly purge his floor. When he sits as a refiner of silver, believe me, it is no child's play to be in the crucible. The Lord took Israel to those waters on purpose to prove them. Have you never prayed, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts"? The Lord may answer you in a way of which you little dream; he may conduct you to some waters of Marah that he may test you and prove you.

Well, now, under the test, see what happened to Israel. *Their faith in God evaporated.* That question, "What shall we drink?" has not a trace of faith in it. I hear it shouted, in different tones, by men, and women, and children, and it all comes to the same thing, "We hoped to quench our thirst here, but we cannot drink this water; and now what shall we drink?" As if God could not, having dried up the sea, turn the earth into a fountain of water! He that made them a path through the midst of the deep waters could make a path for waters to come to them. There was no trace of faith in the murmurers at Marah. They seemed full of faith at the Red Sea, did they not? Many dancers, but no doubters; many singers, but no unbelievers; yet the whole company had not more than a pennyworth of faith amongst them. Moses was the only one who truly believed God; but as for the faith of the rest of them, it was mere gilt; veneer of faith covering a solid mass of unbelief.

Not only did their faith fail, but *their love to God was very feeble.* Did you not hear them three days ago? Why, you can almost hear the strain of their jubilant song, "He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him." Oh, how they love Jehovah, do they not? They were in the love of their espousals; they went after him into the wilderness. But now the cry is, "What shall we drink?" and they murmured against Moses. Theirs was a cupboard love, like yours and mine often is. They loved God very much for what they got out of him; and if he would not give them water to drink, what cared they for him? If he would divide the Red Sea for them, then he should be their God, and they would prepare him a habitation; but if he let them suffer the pangs of thirst, there should be no blessings for him on their lips. Ah, me! how like ourselves were these people! When we test ourselves, we say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And I hope that that is correct; but when the Lord proves us, and

we are very sharply tested, we are apt to say, "Nobody was ever tried as we are, nobody ever had the peculiar difficulties that surround us;" and then we begin murmuring. When we are thinking of how much we love God, it might be more profitable to consider how very little we really love him after all.

And see, brethren, *these people were ready to break away from their God.* They murmured against Moses, because Moses was visible in their midst; but the real murmuring was against God himself. They might ask, as long as they liked, "What shall we drink?" but they could not get a drop of water by repeating that question a thousand times. Would they go back to Egypt? How would they cross the sea? What would Pharaoh and the Egyptians think of them if they did go back? Could they force their way forward through that terrible wilderness? There they stood, entirely dependent upon God, and yet with scarcely a particle of faith in him, and their love all shrivelled up, and all that within three days. O Israel, it is early days to be falling out with your new Husband! They had just been married to the Lord by a new covenant, and baptized in the cloud and in the sea; yet within three days they are ready to fling it all up, and to say, as they did in their hearts, "Would to God that we had remained in the land of Egypt!" Oh, what poor, faithless, treacherous, deceitful creatures we are! It is only grace that makes us anything worth having. It is a wonder of mercy that the Lord puts up with us.

This, then, was Israel's examination. "Well," say you, "did they gain much by that?" Oh, yes! It is always a gain to a man to know the truth about himself. A captain must find his longitude and latitude, that he may know whereabouts his vessel is upon the sea; and this, I believe, is one of the things God would have his people do. The Lord does not wish his children to live in a fool's paradise, and to fancy that they are rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, when they are naked, and poor, and blind, and miserable. He sends us our Marahs, just to blow away our shams, and get rid of our pretences, that we may build our house on the rock, that what is built may be founded on real granite, and may endure even to the end.

So much for the examination of the children of Israel at Marah.

II. But now, beloved friends, these people gained much by EXPERIENCE. Experience cannot be the property of the beginner; he must acquire it. Now what did the children of Israel experience?

First, *they learned that the wilderness was the same to them as it was to other people.* It is well that young converts should know that this world is an evil world even to the man who is saved by grace. You are new; but the world is not. You love holiness; but the world neither loves you, nor loves holiness. You are in a wilderness; you are in the enemy's country; you have not yet come into your rest. If you have not learnt this fact yet, you will have to learn it.

They were to learn, next, that *they were wholly dependent upon God.* When they stood at the brink of the Red Sea, they saw that they were so, and that only God could lead them through the sea; but after that, they were just as dependent. They could not live longer without water, they must perish of thirst unless God supplied them. It is a

blessed lesson for us to learn that we are entirely dependent upon God for all things, but especially for spiritual things. You will not pray unless he gives you the Spirit of supplication. You will have no tenderness of heart unless he works repentance in you. You will have no more faith unless faith be constantly bestowed by God. We are just like these gas-lights; a candle may depend upon its own resources, but this light cannot. Only cut the connection between it and the reservoir of gas, and straightway out it must go. We depend upon God every instant as much as we did at first; and all our old experience, all that we have learned, and known, and taught, will stand us in no stead whatever unless we continue perpetually to receive from God. That was the lesson Israel had to learn.

They also learned that *God and God alone would provide.* They might have to go very short of supplies at times, and they might have a long thirst, but the Lord would not let one of them die of thirst. There is no record that even the tiniest babe in the camp, or even a sheep or goat in that mighty throng, perished for lack of water. God did provide. He does not promise that there shall always be a dinner ready when the dinner-bell rings. You have not such an appetite as you would afterwards have if you waited another hour; and sometimes the Lord may keep you waiting for his supplies that you may enjoy them all the better when they do come. He never is before his time, but he never is behind his time, though he may be behind your time. God will provide. That day, Israel began to understand that word of their father Abraham when he said to Isaac, as you remember, "My son, God will provide." Now it began to come home to the children of the tribes, that God would surely provide; and he did provide for them this great necessary gift of water when they were in the wilderness. That is something to learn. Some of you people of God here have learnt that lesson, for you have been in great straits, and you have been fed by the constant provision of God.

The Israelites were also to learn, in the next place, that *God could make their bitters into sweets*, and he could do that in a very simple way. But he *could* do it; and he could bring good out of evil, and satisfy them by that which formerly nauseated them. Have you learned that lesson yet? Some of you people of God, when you get bitter waters, want to throw them away. Do not throw a drop of it away, for that is the water you have yet to drink. Accept your afflictions. They are a part of your education. Accept your afflictions. When Job could say, "The Lord gave," it was easy to add, "and blessed be the name of the Lord;" but he also added, "and the Lord hath taken away." That was the bitter water; but he drank it, and it was sweet to his taste, and he blessed the name of the Lord for the taking as well as for the giving. God means to bless some of you by the enemy's curse. Though you do not know it, you are to be lifted up by those who are trying to pull you down. I noticed some of the papers writing unkindly of our dear friend, John McNeill, and saying all manner of hard things of him; and I rejoiced in my heart. I hoped that they would go ahead at that work. I remember how they did it to me, all the bitterness they could invent, in years gone by. Every form and fashion of abuse was heaped upon me, and what a wonderful advertisement it

was! What a kindness they were doing me without intending it! Let them alone; and depend upon it, God will make the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.

Next, notice, that *God works by his own means.* The Lord showed Moses a tree, and when he cast that tree into the waters, they became sweet. I think, if I had been there, I should have suggested that Moses should use that rod of his. Did he not divide the Red Sea with it? Why not just put his rod into the water, and stir it up, and make it sweet? Oh, yes, you know, we are always for running to old methods! But God is a Sovereign, and he will work as he pleases. There was a tree growing there, perhaps the wood of it was bitter, certainly it had no efficacy for making bitter water sweet; but God bade Moses cast that tree into the waters, and as soon as it was done, the waters were made sweet. Now, you have just to believe that God will help you. You do not know how he will do it, and perhaps he will not help you in the old way. Do not despair because Moses does not bring out his rod, for the Lord can relieve you without that. That dear friend who has helped you so many years is gone. Well, but God has not gone, and he is not dependent upon that one person, nor upon any other. Therefore leave God as a King to do as he pleases, for his pleasure is the wisest, and let his pleasure be your pleasure.

Israel also learned by experience that *God himself was to be looked to, and nobody else.* If there were waters beneath their feet, they were of no value until God spoke sweetness into them; if Moses himself stood there, he could do nothing but pray to the Lord. God himself must come, and by a miracle must make the water fit to drink. Brethren, it is always a gain to us in our experience when we get farther and farther away from every dependence but the Lord. You may have friends forsaking you, and they who used to praise you may now be speaking evil of you, and you may come at last to feel that you have nothing but God to depend upon. Then is the time that faith really comes into exercise. I could not help laughing when I read the story of a good Christian lady, who spoke of our friend, Mr. Hudson Taylor: "Why," she said, "there is no Society to take care of him! Poor man, he has nobody but God to depend upon!" You may well smile. "*Nobody but God to depend upon;*" but that is everybody to depend upon. Oh, if we could only be brought to that experience, Marah's waters would indeed be a heavenly tonic to us! The child of God who has learned this truth experimentally can say, "My soul is weaned from all the nether springs, but she drinks from the upper spring that flows from beneath the throne of God, and she finds every drop to have a heavenly sweetness in it."

Thus Israel gained by experience as well as by examination.

III. Now comes the third point, Israel gained by EDUCATION. The Lord was not going to lead a mob of slaves into Canaan, to go and behave like slaves there. They had to be tutored. The wilderness was the Oxford and Cambridge for God's students. There they went to the University, and he taught and trained them, and they took their degree before they entered into the promised land. There is no University for a Christian like that of sorrow and trial.

Now the Israelites were educated by Marah, first, in *self-distrust.* How could they ever trust themselves again when, three days after singing that jubilant song, they caught themselves murmuring against Moses? If they had been intelligent, as they were not, they would each one have said to his fellow, "Behold the boastfulness of our evil hearts." What a terrible drop it is from "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea," to "What shall we drink?" That is just how you and I come down when we are left to ourselves. Thus Israel learnt self-distrust.

Next, they learned, as I have told you before, *daily dependence.* They learned that they must depend upon God even for a drop of water. That is the dependence of a Christian man. He has nothing and he can do nothing without his God. We have no bread, no water, no anything, except as God shall give it to us. A blessed lesson was this for Israel. They were educated well at Marah.

Next, they learned *the power of prayer.* Will you kindly fix your eyes upon those two verses, twenty-four and twenty-five? "And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord." Moses did not answer them; he did not upbraid them; he did not even begin to argue with them; but he cried unto the Lord, and thus the people learned the power of prayer. They might have gone on murmuring until now, if they could have lived so long, and the waters of Marah would have been as bitter as ever. But Moses cried unto the Lord; and that prayer did what all the murmuring could not do. Were half the breath we vainly spend in going round to our neighbours, asking their sympathy, spent in going direct to God in prayer, we should sooner get out of our troubles. "Straightforward makes the best runner," and he that runs straight to God in every time of adversity shall soon find relief.

Again, at Marah the Israelites began to learn *their separateness from Egypt.* The Egyptians never drank these bitter waters; but the Egyptians had foul diseases, and terrible plagues. Now, the Lord tells his people that he will not put upon them any of the diseases of Egypt. God turned the rivers of Egypt into blood, but here he turns the bitter waters into fresh streams. His miracles were for Israel, and against Egypt; and they began to perceive clearly that they had nothing to do with the Egyptians. They were a separated people. It is a valuable piece of education for a young Christian to find out that he does not belong to the world. The tendency is to think that, though you are in the church, you can be in the world, too, and that you belong, in a measure, to both. That will never do. The Lord means to fetch his people right out of the world, and he will have them out; and if any of you try to be like the mouse behind the wainscot, and only come out and feed in the dark, I mean that you come to Christ for a little food when nobody sees you, and then go and hide away with the world, there will be a black cat after you before long. Some trouble or other will happen to you. That game will never please God, and never profit you; therefore drop it, I pray you, or else some bitter Marah will teach you that you are not of the world.

Israel had next to learn *the position of obedience.* Will you kindly

notice this? God did not say, "Do this, and I will bring you out of Egypt." No; but after he brought them out, he said, "Hearken to my commandments, and keep my statutes." Salvation comes first, and then obedience. Saved first, brought through the Red Sea with the high hand of God's gracious power, and, after that, become his obedient people. Obedience follows after redemption and deliverance. First the blood of sprinkling on the door-posts; and after that, thou shalt give ear unto the voice of the Lord thy God, and diligently hearken to him.

Israel also learned *the nature of obedience.* Obedience does not merely do what it knows it should do, but it finds out what it ought to do. Oh, you Christian people, do you make a practice of reading God's Word to see what he would have you do? I am afraid that there are some who make a point of not seeing some of the duties which are not pleasing to them. There are some who half shun portions of Scripture because they would trouble their consciences. Let it not be so with any of us; but let us hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord our God. If you are saved, the kind of obedience that you are bound to render is that of a willing heart, which cries like Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

Then, Israel learned *the promise made to obedience:* "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians." For you there shall be no plagues. God may try you, yet it will be not in anger, but in his dear covenant love. Everything shall be changed for you. If sickness comes, it shall be overruled for your spiritual health. When death comes, it shall only introduce you to eternal life. The Lord will be very gracious to you. He that forgives our sins also heals all our diseases. His name is Jehovah Rophi. What an education it is for us when we feel that the God that healed the waters heals us, and heals everything that has to do with us; changes the aspect of all things about us, takes the sting out of the wasp, and turns it into a bee; takes away the venom from the serpent, and gives us its wisdom, that we may be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves! Oh, the wonderful cure-alls of God, the heavenly catholicon of the cross, the universal remedy of a dying Saviour! May our experience educate us in the knowledge of that gracious healing!

The hour has struck, and I must therefore cease, only I must say that this is the one lesson of to-night; dear people of God, trust your God. Trust your God, not only when your mouth is full of honey, but when it is full of gall. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him;" for he in whom you trust will bless you.

But if you are not trusting him, then shall plagues, like those of Egypt, come upon you. Darkness and all manner of evils shall waylay you, till, at last, there shall be heard in your house a bitter cry, for the destroying angel will overtake you, and plunge his avenging sword into your guilty hearts. God save you from that terrible doom, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS XV., AND JEREMIAH VII. 21—26.

Exodus xv.—Verse 1. *Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the* LORD, *and spake, saying, I will sing unto the* LORD, *for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.*

Note, that they were singing, singing a very loud and triumphant song; and you would have thought that they would have kept on singing for the next forty years. It was such a triumph, such a deliverance, God's arm was made so bare before their eyes, that you would have thought that their jubilation would have lasted throughout a lifetime, at the least. On the contrary, it lasted a very little while. Yet what a song it was that they sang! "I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

What a song of triumph that is which is sung by souls saved from sin, and death, and hell, by the great atoning sacrifice of Christ! Oh, when we first realize that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we do, indeed, "feel like singing all the time", for our sins are washed away, and we have a notion that we shall always keep on singing till we join in the song of the glorified in heaven. So it ought to be; but, alas, from sad experience we know that it is not so!

However, the song of Moses and the children of Israel goes on:—

2. *The* LORD *is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.*

The heart is prompted by gratitude to think of doing something for God. It thinks of preparing him a habitation; but what habitation shall we prepare for him whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain? All that we can possibly do is too little for the greatness of his grace and his glory. "Thou didst well that it was in thine heart," said the Lord to David, though he might not prepare God a habitation. It is well that it is in our heart to-day to do some little thing for the glory of God. As an old Puritan says, we give for love-tokens a cracked sixpence, or a flower that soon fades. It is accepted as a love-token, not for its intrinsic value, but as an emblem of what our heart feels, and would do if it could. Even so it is with the Lord and the service his people seek to render to him. He takes our trifles, and makes much of them.

3—5. *The* LORD *is a man of war: the* LORD *is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom as a stone.*

And this is what has happened to all the powers that were against us. Our sins, where are they? Has not the Lord cast them into the depths of the sea? Yes, blessed be his name for ever! We, like Israel on the other side of the Red Sea, praise the Lord that we have escaped out of the hand of the oppressor, and that Pharaoh holds us as servants no longer. To the Lord alone is due the glory of our deliverance.

6—8. *Thy right hand, O* LORD, *is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O* LORD, *hath dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee: thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.*

What cannot God do? The liquid becomes solid; nature itself changes when the God of nature puts forth his power. Trust thou in God, and he will do wonders for thee also, as he did for his ancient people Israel.

9. *The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.*

How the powers of darkness rage and rave! What a flurry they are in! What big words they speak! What cruel designs they harbour against God's people! See how still and calm is the Lord amid all their raging.

10. *Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.*

God has only to use his breath to blow upon them, and away they go, and all their boastings, too. One word from the mouth of God can destroy all our doubts and fears. The breath of his Spirit can sink all our enemies, and make us sing for joy of heart at our great deliverance.

11—13. *Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? Thou stretchedst out thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.*

The song becomes prophetic. All joy gets to be prophetic; at least, the joy of earth when once it is touched with the live coal from off the heavenly altar. We begin to praise God "for all the grace we have not tasted yet," as Israel here does. They praise the Lord for leading his people through the wilderness, and bringing them unto his holy habitation, even while they are only at the beginning of their journey.

14. *The people—*

That is, the Canaanites,—

14, 15. *Shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Palestina. Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.*

When they hear of the great things that Jehovah has done for his people, they shall feel that the day of their doom is come. Who can stand against so mighty a God? Yet there are some, in our day, whose hearts are stouter and harder than the hearts of the dukes of Edom and the mighty men of Moab. They hear of God's judgments upon the wicked, and of the terrible doom of the ungodly, and yet they dare to defy the Lord, and to continue in their evil ways.

16—18. *Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, which thou hast purchased. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established. The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.*

How grandly that last note must have pealed forth from the hundreds of thousands of male voices! The women must also have sung it with the utmost conceivable joy as they struck their timbrels, and danced before the Lord.

19—22. *For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them; but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea. And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea. So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water.*

At first, they were afraid of too much water, from the waves of the

sea; now they are afraid of too little. Will their songs be over in three days? Ah, yes! At the end of the third day they came to some springs of water, but they were brackish or bitter.

23, 24. *And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured—*

Ah, these singers had sadly changed their notes! Where are the timbrels now? "The people murmured"—

24—27. *Against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the* LORD; *and the* LORD *shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the* LORD *thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the* LORD *that healeth thee. And they came to Elim,*

They did not stop long at Marah, probably only a few hours.

27. *Where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.*

That Elim must have been prepared on purpose for Israel. Twelve springs of water—that was the number of the tribes. Threescore and ten palm trees—that was the number of the elders. I do not wonder that Moses noted these numbers. It must have seemed remarkable that, long before they came there, there were the wells and there were the palm trees all ready for their encampment. It was most significant that these things should have been prepared according to the number of the children of Israel; but everything else is arranged by the same rule. When the Lord divided the people, he set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel. It is by this line that he builds his Church still. It is according to his thoughts of his own people that he rules everything in his providence.

There are a few verses in the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, at the seventh chapter, which we will read concerning this subject.

Jeremiah vii.—Verses 21, 22. *Thus saith the* LORD *of hosts, the God of Israel; Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices:*

You have heard what God said to them when they came out of Egypt.

23—26. *But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.*

God grant that these words may never be a truthful description of us! Oh, may we keep the covenant of our God, and walk before him with a holy, reverent fear, and serve him all our days! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—731, 746, 743.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WATCHING FOR CHRIST'S COMING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 2ND, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 7th, 1889.

"Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."—Luke xii. 37, 38.

I AM about to speak of the Second Coming of Christ; and I felt thankful that my dear brother's prayer, although we had not been in consultation with one another upon the matter, was in every way so suitable to the subject upon which I am to speak. He led us in prayer to think of our coming Lord; so that I trust you are on the margin of the subject now, and that you will not have to make any very great exertion of mind to plunge into mid-stream, and be carried away with the full current of thought concerning the Second Advent of the Saviour. It is a very appropriate topic when we come to the Lord's table; for, as that prayer reminded us, the Lord's supper looks backward, and is a memorial of his agony; but it looks forward, and is an anticipation of his glory. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." By looking forward, in a right state of heart, to that Second Coming of Christ which is the joy of his Church, you will be also in a right state of heart for coming to the communion-table. May the Holy Ghost make it to be so!

The posture at the communion-table, as you know, according to our Lord's example, was not that of kneeling, but that of reclining. The easiest position which you can assume is the most fitting for the Lord's supper; and yet remember that the supper was no sooner finished, than "they sang a hymn," and when that hymn was concluded, they went out into the Mount of Olives to the agonies of Gethsemane. It often seems to me as if now, after finding rest at the table by feeding upon Christ, whose real presence we have, not after a carnal sort, but after a spiritual sort, after that, we sing a hymn, as if we would go

out to meet our Lord in his Second Coming, not going to the Mount of Olives to see him in a bloody sweat, but to hear that word of the angel, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." I do not think we ought to feel at all surprised if we were to go out from the table of fellowship to-night, and meet our Lord at once; nay, we should be always waiting for his appearing, ever expecting him, not knowing at what hour the Master of the house shall come. The world does not expect him; it goes on with its eating and drinking, its marrying and giving in marriage; but his own family should expect him. When he will return from the wedding, I trust that he will not find the door shut against him, but that we shall be ready to open to our Lord immediately he knocketh. That is the object of the few words that I shall have to say to-night, to stir you up, and my own heart also, to be ever watching for Christ's Second Coming.

I. First, THE LORD WILL COME. He that has come once is to come again; he will come a second time. The Lord will come.

He will come again, for *he has promised to return*. We have his own word for it. That is our first reason for expecting him. Among the last of the words which he spoke to his servant John are these, "Surely I come quickly." You may read it, "I am coming quickly. I am even now upon the road. I am travelling as fast as wisdom allows. I am always coming, and coming quickly." Our Lord has promised to come, and to come in person. Some try to explain the Second Coming of Christ as though it meant the believer dying. You may, if you like, consider that Christ comes to his saints in death. In a certain sense, he does; but that sense will never bear out the full meaning of the teaching of the Second Advent with which the Scripture is full. No, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." He who went up to heaven will come down from heaven, and stand in the latter day upon the earth. Every redeemed soul can say with Job, "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Christ will as certainly be here again in glory as he once was here in shame, for he has promised to return.

Moreover, *the great scheme of redemption requires Christ's return*. It is a part of that scheme that, as he came once with a sin-offering, he should come a second time without a sin-offering, that, as he came once to redeem, he should come a second time to claim the inheritance which he has so dearly bought. He came once, that his heel might be bruised; he comes again, to break the serpent's head, and, with a rod of iron, to dash his enemies in pieces, as potters' vessels. He came once, to wear the crown of thorns; he must come again, to wear the diadem of universal dominion. He comes to the marriage supper; he comes to gather his saints together; he comes to glorify them with himself on this same earth where once he and they were despised and rejected of men. Make you sure of this, that the whole drama of redemption cannot be perfected without this last act of the coming of the King. The complete history of Paradise Regained requires that the New Jerusalem should come down from God out of heaven, prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband; and it also requires that the heavenly Bridegroom should come riding forth on his white horse, conquering and to conquer, King of kings and Lord of lords, amidst the everlasting hallelujahs of saints and angels. It must be so. The man of Nazareth will come again. None shall spit in his face then; but every knee shall bow before him. The Crucified shall come again; and though the nail-prints will be visible, no nails shall then fasten his dear hands to the tree; but instead thereof, he shall grasp the sceptre of universal sovereignty; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Hallelujah!

When will he come? Ah, that is the question, the question of questions! *He will come in his own time.* He will come in due time. A brother minister, calling upon me, said, as we sat together, "I should like to ask you a lot of questions about the future." "Oh, well!" I replied, "I cannot answer you, for I daresay I know no more about it than you do." "But," said he, "what about the Lord's Second Advent? Will there not be the millennium first?" I said, "I cannot tell whether there will be the millennium first; but this I know, the Scripture has left the whole matter, as far as I can see, with an intentional indistinctness, that we may be always expecting Christ to come, and that we may be watching for his coming at any hour and every hour. I think that the millennium will commence after his coming, and not before it. I cannot imagine the kingdom with the King absent. It seems to me to be an essential part of the millennial glory that the King shall then be revealed; at the same time, I am not going to lay down anything definite upon that point. He may not come for a thousand years; he may come to-night. The teaching of Scripture is, first of all, 'In such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' It is clear that, if it were revealed that a thousand years must elapse before he would come, we might very well go to sleep for that time, for we should have no reason to expect that he would come when Scripture told us he would not."

"Well," answered my friend, "but when Christ comes, that will be the general judgment, will it not?" Then I quoted these texts, "The dead in Christ shall rise first." "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." I said, "There is a resurrection from among the dead to which the Apostle Paul laboured to attain. We shall all rise; but the righteous shall rise a thousand years before the ungodly. There is to be that interval of time between the one and the other; whether that is the millennial glory, or not, this deponent sayeth not, though he thinks it is. But this is the main point, the Lord shall come. We know not when we are to expect his coming; we are not to lay down, as absolutely fixed, any definite prediction or circumstance that would allow us to go to sleep until that prediction was fulfilled, or that circumstance was apparent."

"Will not the Jews be converted to Christ, and restored to their land?" enquired my friend. I replied, "Yes, I think so. Surely they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son; and God shall give them the kingdom and the glory, for they are his people, whom he has not

for ever cast away. The Jews, who are the natural olive branches, shall yet be grafted into their own olive tree again, and then shall be the fulness of the Gentiles." "Will that be before Christ comes, or after?" asked my friend. I answered, "I think it will be after he comes; but whether or no, I am not going to commit myself to any definite opinion on the subject."

To you, my dear friends, I say,—Read for yourselves, and search for yourselves; for still this stands first, and is the only thing that I will insist upon to-night, the Lord will come. He may come now; he may come to-morrow; he may come in the first watch of the night, or the second watch, or he may wait until the morning watch; but the one word that he gives to you all is, "Watch! Watch! Watch!" that whenever he shall come, you may be ready to open to him, and to say, in the language of the hymn we sang just now,—

"Hallelujah!
Welcome, welcome, Judge divine!"

So far I know that we are Scriptural, and therefore perfectly safe in our statements about the Lord's Second Advent.

Brethren, I would be earnest on this point, for *the notion of the delay of Christ's Coming is always harmful*, however you arrive at it, whether it be by studying prophecy, or in any other way. If you come to be of the opinion of the servant mentioned in the forty-fifth verse, you are wrong: "If that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers." Do not, therefore, get the idea that the Lord delayeth his Coming, and that he will not or cannot come as yet. Far better would it be for you to stand on the tiptoe of expectation, and to be rather disappointed to think that he does not come. I do not wish you to be shaken in mind so as to act fanatically or foolishly, as certain people did in America, when they went out into the woods with ascension dresses on, so as to go straight up all of a sudden. Fall into none of those absurd ideas that have led people to leave a chair vacant at the table, and to put an empty plate, because the Lord might come and want it; and try to avoid all other superstitious nonsense. To stand star-gazing at the prophecies, with your mouth wide open, is just the wrong thing; far better will it be to go on working for your Lord, getting yourself and your service ready for his appearing, and cheering yourself all the while with this thought, "While I am at work, my Master may come. Before I get weary, my Master may return. While others are mocking at me, my Master may appear; and whether they mock or applaud, is nothing to me. I live before the great Task-master's eye, and do my service knowing that he sees me, and expecting that, by-and-by, he will reveal himself to me, and then he will reveal me and my right intention to misrepresenting men." That is the first point, brethren, the Lord will come. Settle that in your minds. He will come in his own time, and we are always to be looking for his appearing.

II. Now, secondly, THE LORD BIDS US WATCH FOR HIM. That is the marrow of the text: "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

Now what is this watching? Not wishing to use my own words, I thought that I would call your attention to the context. The first essential part of this watching is that we are *not to be taken up with present things*. You remember that the twenty-second verse is about not taking thought what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; you are not to be absorbed in that. You who are Christians are not to live the fleshly, selfish life that asks, "What shall I eat and drink? How can I store up my goods? How can I get food and raiment here?" You are something more than dumb, driven cattle, that must think of hay and water. You have immortal spirits. Rise to the dignity of your immortality. Begin to think of the kingdom, the kingdom so soon to come, the kingdom which your Father has given you, and which, therefore, you must certainly inherit, the kingdom which Christ has prepared for you, and for which he is making you kings and priests unto God, that you may reign with him for ever and ever. Oh, be not earth-bound! Do not cast your anchor here in these troubled waters. Build not your nest on any of these trees; they are all marked for the axe, and are coming down; and your nest will come down, too, if you build it here. Set your affection on things above, up yonder,—

> "Up where eternal ages roll,
> Where solid pleasures never die,
> And fruits eternal feast the soul;"

there project your thoughts and your anxieties, and have a care about the world to come. Be not anxious about the things that pertain to this life. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Reading further down, in the thirty-fifth verse, you will notice that watching implies *keeping ourselves in a serviceable condition:* "Let your loins be girded about." You know how the Orientals wear flowing robes, which are always getting in their way. They cannot walk without being tripped up; so that, if a man has a piece of work on hand, he just tucks in his robe under his girdle, ties his girdle up tightly, and gets ready for his task, as we should say in English, turning the Oriental into the Western figure, rolling up your shirt-sleeves, and preparing for work. That is the way to wait for the Lord, ready for service, that, when he comes, he may never find you idle. I called to see a sister one morning; and when I called, she was cleaning the front steps with some whitening, and she said, "Oh, my dear pastor, I am sorry that you should call upon me just now! I would not have had you see me like this on any account." I answered, "That is how I like to see you, busy at your work. I should not have liked to have come in, and caught you talking to your neighbour over the back palings. That would not have pleased me at all. May your Lord, when he comes, find you just so, doing your duty!" You see exactly what is meant; you are to be doing your duty; you are to be engaged about those vocations to which God has called you. You are

to be doing it all out of love to Christ, and as service for him. Oh, that we might watch in that style, with our loins girded about! Work, and wait, and watch! Can you put those three things together? Work, and wait, and watch! This is what your Master asks of you.

And next, he would have us *wait with our lights burning.* If the Master comes home late, let us sit up late for him. It is not for us to go to bed till he comes home. Have the lights all trimmed; have his chamber well lit up; have the entrance-hall ready for his approach. When the King comes, have your torches flaming, that you may go out to meet the royal Bridegroom, and escort him to his home. If we are to watch for the Lord, as we ought, it must be with lamps burning. Are you making your light to shine among men? Do you think that your conduct and character are an example that will do your neighbours good, and are you trying to teach others the way of salvation? Some professors are like dark lanterns, or candles under a bushel. May we never be such! May we stand with our lamps trimmed, and our lights burning, and we ourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord; not walking in darkness, nor concealing our light, but letting it shine brightly! That is the way to watch for Christ, with your girdle tight about you because you are ready for work, and your lamp flaming out with brightness because you are anxious to illuminate the dark world in which you live.

To put it very plainly, I think that watching for the Coming of the Lord means *acting just as you would wish to be acting if he were to come.* I saw, in the Orphanage school-room, that little motto, "What would Jesus do?" That is a very splendid motto for our whole life, "What would Jesus do in such a case and in such a case?" Do just that. Another good motto is, "What would Jesus think of me if he were to come?" There are some places into which a Christian could not go, for he would not like his Master to find him there. There are some kinds of amusements into which a believer would never enter, for he would be ashamed for his Master to come and find him there. There are some conditions of angry temper, of pride, petulance, or spiritual sloth, in which you would not like to be if you felt that the Master was coming. Suppose an angel's wing should brush your cheek just as you have spoken some unkind word, and a voice should say, "Your Master is coming," you would tremble, I am sure, to meet him in such a condition. Oh, beloved, let us try every morning to get up as if that were the morning in which Christ would come; and when we go up to bed at night, may we lie down with this thought, "Perhaps I shall be awakened by the ringing out of the silver trumpets heralding his Coming. Before the sun arises, I may be startled from my dreams by the greatest of all cries, 'The Lord is come! The Lord is come!'" What a check, what an incentive, what a bridle, what a spur, such thoughts as these would be to us! Take this for the guide of your whole life. Act as if Jesus would come during the act in which you are engaged; and if you would not wish to be caught in that act by the Coming of the Lord, let it not be your act.

The second verse of our text speaks about the Master coming in the second watch, or in the third watch. *We are to act as those who keep the watches of the age for Christ.* Among the Romans, it was as it is on board

ship, there were certain watches. A Roman soldier, perhaps, stood on guard for three hours, and when he had been on the watch for three hours, there came another sentry who took his place, and the first man retired, and went back to the barracks, and the fresh sentinel stood in his place during his allotted time. Brethren, we have succeeded a long line of watchmen. Since the days of our Lord, when he sent out the chosen twelve to stand upon the citadel, and tell how the night waxed or waned, how have the watchers come and gone! Our God has changed the watchers, but he has kept the watch. He still sets watchmen on the walls of Zion, who cannot hold their peace day or night, but must watch for the Coming of their Master, watch against evil times, watch against error, and watch for the souls of men. At this time, some of us are called to be specially on the watch, and dare we sleep? After such a line of lynx-eyed watchmen, who counted not their lives dear unto them that they might hold their post, and watch against the foe, shall we be cravens, and be afraid; or shall we be sluggards, and go to our beds? By him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, we pray that we may never be guilty of treason to his sacred name and truth; but may we watch on to the last moment when there shall ring out the clarion cry, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." People of the Tabernacle, you are set to watch to-night just as they did in the brave days of old! Whitefield and Wesley's men were watchers; and those before them, in the days of Luther and of Calvin, and backward even to the days of our Lord. They kept the watches of the night, and you must do the same, until—

"Upstarting at the midnight cry,
'Behold your heavenly Bridegroom nigh,'"

you go forth to welcome your returning Lord.

We are to wait with one object in view, viz., *to open the door to him, and to welcome him:* "that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Perhaps you know what it is to go home to a loving, tender wife and children who are watching for you. You have been on a journey; you have been absent for some little time; you have written them letters which they have greatly valued; you have heard from them; but all that is nothing like your personal presence. They are looking out for you; and if, perchance, the boat should fail you, or the train be late, if you arrived at eleven or twelve o'clock at night, you would not expect to find the house all shut up, and nobody watching for you. No, you had told them that you would come, and you were quite sure that they would watch for you. I feel rebuked myself, sometimes, for not watching for my Master, when I know that, at this very time, my dogs are sitting against the door, waiting for me; and long before I reach home, there they will be, and at the first sound of the carriage-wheels, they will lift up their voices with delight because their master is coming home. Oh, if we loved our Lord as dogs love their masters, how we should catch the first sound of his Coming, and be waiting, always waiting, and never happy until at last we should see him! Pardon me for using a dog as a picture of what you ought to be; but when you have attained to a state above that, I will find another illustration to explain my meaning.

III. Now, lastly, THERE IS A REWARD FOR WATCHERS. Their reward is this, "Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."

They have a present blessedness. It is a very blessed thing to be on the watch for Christ, it is a blessing to us now. How it detaches you from the world! You can be poor without murmuring; you can be rich without worldliness; you can be sick without sorrowing; you can be healthy without presumption. If you are always waiting for Christ's Coming, untold blessings are wrapped up in that glorious hope. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure." Blessednesses are heaped up one upon another in that state of heart in which a man is always looking for his Lord.

But what will be the blessedness when Jesus does come? Well, a part of that blessedness will be *in future service.* You must not think that, when you have done working here, you Sunday-school teachers, and those of us who preach and teach, that the Master will say, "I have discharged you from my service. Go and sit on a heavenly mount, and sing yourselves away for ever and ever." Not a bit of it. I am but learning how to preach now; I shall be able to preach by-and-by. You are only learning to teach now; you will be able to teach by-and-by. Yes, to angels, and principalities, and powers, you shall make known the manifold wisdom of God. I sometimes aspire to the thought of a congregation of angels and archangels, who shall sit and wonder, as I tell what God has done for me; and I shall be to them an everlasting monument of the grace of God to an unworthy wretch, upon whom he looked with infinite compassion, and saved with a wonderful salvation. All those stars, those worlds of light, who knows how many of them are inhabited? I believe there are regions beyond our imagination to which every child of God shall become an everlasting illumination, a living example of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The people in those far-distant lands could not see Calvary as this world has seen it; but they shall hear of it from the redeemed. Remember how the Lord will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." He is to keep on doing something, you see. Instead of having some little bit of a village to govern, he is to be made ruler over some great province. So it is in this passage. Read the forty-fourth verse: "Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." That is, the man who has been a faithful and wise steward of God here, will be called of God to more eminent service hereafter. If he serve his Master well, when his Master comes, he will promote him to still higher service. Do you not know how it used to be in the Spartan army? Here is a man who has fought well, and been a splendid soldier. He is covered with wounds on his breast. The next time that there is a war, they say, "Poor fellow, we will reward him! He shall lead the way in the first battle. He fought so well before, when he met one hundred with a little troop behind him; now he shall meet ten thousand with a larger troop." "Oh!" say you, "that is giving him more work." That is God's way of rewarding his people, and a blessed thing it is for the industrious servant. His rest is in serving

God with all his might. This shall be our heaven, not to go there to roost, but to be always on the wing; for ever flying, and for ever resting at the same time. "They do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." "His servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face." These two things blended together make a noble ambition for every Christian.

May the Lord keep you waiting, working, watching, that when he comes, you may have the blessedness of entering upon some larger, higher, nobler service than you could accomplish now, for which you are preparing by the lowlier and more arduous service of this world! God bless you, beloved, and if any of you do not know my Lord, and therefore do not look for his appearing, remember that he will come whether you look for him or not; and when he comes, you will have to stand at his bar. One of the events that will follow his Coming will be your being summoned before his judgment-seat, and how will you answer him then? How will you answer him if you have refused his love, and turned a deaf ear to the invitations of his mercy? If you have delayed, and delayed, and delayed, and delayed, how will you answer him? How will you answer him in that day? If you stand speechless, your silence will condemn you, and the King will say, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away." God grant that we may believe in the Lord Jesus unto life eternal, and then wait for his appearing from heaven, for his love's sake! Amen.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XII. 13—48.

Verses 13, 14. *And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?*

Our Lord kept to his proper business, which was the preaching of the gospel and the healing of the sick. We find, in these days, that the minister of the gospel is asked to do almost everything. He must be a politician; he must be a social reformer; he must be I know not what. For my part, I often feel as if I could answer, "Who made me to do anything of the kind? If I can preach the gospel, I shall have done well if I do that to the glory of God, and to the salvation of men. Surely there are enough people to be judges and dividers, there are quite sufficient politicians to attend to politics, and plenty of men who feel themselves qualified to direct social reforms. Some of us may be spared to attend to spiritual affairs."

15. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

Jesus gave his hearers a good moral and spiritual lesson from the occurrence which they had witnessed, and then passed on to speak of the matter which always occupied his thoughts.

16, 17. *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

He did not enquire, "Where can I find a needy case in which I may use my superfluity for charity?" Oh, no! "How can I hoard it? How can I keep it all to myself?" This was a selfish, worldly man.

18—20. *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool,—*

Other men said of him, "This is a wise man; he minds the main chance; he is a fellow plentifully endowed with good sense and prudence;" but God said unto him, "Thou fool,"—

20. *This night thy soul shall be required of thee:*

I should like you to set that up as the counter picture to the one that we had this morning, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." That was said by Christ to the penitent thief, but to this impenitent rich man, God said, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee."

20, 21. *Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.*

"He that layeth up treasure for himself." That was the chief point of this man's wrong-doing, his selfishness. His charity began at home, and ended there; he lived only for himself.

22, 23. *And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.*

Have no anxious, carking care. Do not be looking after the inferior things, and neglecting your soul. Take care of your soul; your body will take care of itself better than your soul can. The raiment for the body will come in due time; but the clothing for the soul is the all-important matter. Therefore, see to that.

24—27. *Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*

The lilies simply stand still in the sunlight, and silently say to us, "See how beautiful are the thoughts of God." If we could just drink in God's love, and then, almost without speech, show it in our lives, how we should glorify his name!

28. *If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith!*

But you have some faith, else the Saviour would not have said to you, "O ye of little faith!" The man who has no faith may well go on fretting, toiling, spinning; but he that hath faith, as he goes forth to his daily labour, looks beyond that to the God of providence, and thus God keeps him without care, and provides for him.

29, 30. *And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.*

He knows that you must go and work for these things; but he would not have you fret and fume about them. "Your Father knows." He will provide. It is enough for him to know his children's wants, and he will be sure to provide for them.

31. *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Thrown in as a kind of make-weight. You get the spiritual, and then the common blessings of life shall be added unto you.

32. *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

That is your share. Others may have inferior joys; but you are to have the kingdom. The Lord could not give you more than that; and he will not give you less.

33. *Sell that ye have, and give alms;*

Do not merely give away what you can spare; but even pinch yourself sometimes, and sell what you can that you may have the more to give.

33. *Provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.*

Put some of your estate where it cannot be lost. Take care that you invest some of it for God's poor, and God's work, where the interest will be sure, and the investment will be safe.

34. *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Make sure of that. Your heart will go after your treasure; and if none of your treasure has gone to heaven, none of your heart will go there.

35, 36. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.*

Our Lord constantly reminded his disciples that the time would come when he must leave them for a season; but he always kept before them the thought of his return, and bade them watch for him as those that wait for their lord.

37—39. *Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the good man of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.*

As he does not know when the thief will come, he is always watching.

40, 41. *Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?*

And the Lord told him that, while it was spoken to all, it had a very special bearing upon apostolic men, upon preachers of the gospel, ministers of Christ.

42—44. *And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.*

Just as Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over all Egypt, so, when men have done well in the ministry of Christ, he will promote them, and they shall do still more for him.

45, 46. *But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder,*

This is a truly terrible expression. We are sometimes charged with using too strong expressions with regard to the wrath to come. It is quite impossible that we should do so, even if we tried, for the expressions of the Lord Jesus are more profoundly terrible than any which even mediæval writers have ever been known to invent.

46. *And will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.*

The worst portion that any man can get is with the unbelievers. Are there not some here who may, in this verse, see what a dark doom theirs will be if they are among those who are described as being cut in sunder, and having their portion with the unbelievers?

47. *And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

So that there are different measures of responsibility; there are degrees in guilt, and degrees in punishment.

48. *But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

O my brethren! let those of us who are privileged with the possession of the gospel, and privileged with any amount of ability to spread it, enquire whether we could give in a good account if the Lord were to come to-night, and summon us, as stewards, to give an account of our stewardship.

God bless to us all the reading of his Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—364, 363, 936.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE ARROWS, OR SIX?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 9TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, April 25th, 1889.

"And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice."—2 Kings xiii. 18, 19.

IT is a very difficult task to show the meeting-place of the purpose of God and the free agency of man. One thing is quite clear, we ought not to deny either of them, for they are both facts. It is a fact that God has purposed all things both great and little; neither will anything happen but according to his eternal purpose and decree. It is also a sure and certain fact that, oftentimes, events hang upon the choice of men. Their will has a singular potency. In the case before us, the arrows are in the hands of the king of Israel; and according to whether he shall shoot once, twice, thrice, or five or six times, so will the nation's history be affected. Now, how these two things can both be true, I cannot tell you; neither, probably, after long debate, could the wisest men in heaven tell you, not even with the assistance of cherubim and seraphim. If they could tell you, what would you know, and in what way would you be benefited if you could find out this secret? I believe that it would be as difficult to show that these two things do not agree, as it is to show how they can agree. They are two facts that run side by side, like parallel lines. Things are often left to the will of men; yet everything does come to pass in the end according to the will of God. Can you not believe them both? And is not the space between them a very convenient place to kneel in, adoring and worshipping him whom you cannot understand? If you could understand your religion, it would be one that did not come from God; it would have been made by a man of limited capacity, like yourselves, who was therefore able to make what you can comprehend; but inasmuch as there are mysteries in your faith, to the top of which you cannot climb, be thankful that you need not climb them.

But sometimes a practical question about these two points does arise. It is correct to say, speaking after the manner of men, "If men are earnest, if men are believing, if men are prayerful, such and such a blessing will come;" and that the blessing does not come, may be rightly traced to the fact that they were not as prayerful and as believing as they ought to have been. I believe that God will save his own elect, and I also believe that, if I do not preach the gospel, the blood of men will be laid at my door. I believe that God will give to his Son to see of the travail of his soul; but yet, if you who are his people are not earnest in seeking the salvation of souls, and they perish, their blood will be required at your hand. This remark seems to be suggested by the story before us. God knew how many times the Syrians would be beaten, and yet he left king Joash to decide whether they should be beaten three times or six times.

Next, reflect what great things may lie in a man's hand. There stood Joash, an unworthy king; and yet in his hands lay, measurably, the destiny of his people. If he will take those arrows, and will shoot five or six times, their great enemy will be broken in pieces. If he will be dilatory, and will only shoot three times, he will get only a measure of victory; and poor Israel will ultimately have to suffer again from this enemy, who has been only scotched, and not killed. You do not know, dear friends, what responsibility lies upon you. You are the father of a family; what blessings may come to your household, or may be missed by your children, through your conduct! Dear mother, you think yourself obscured, yet your child's future will depend upon your teaching, or non-teaching. Great events depend upon little matters, as large vessels hang upon small nails; and you who are here to-night, sitting in the pews, and meditating upon your future course of action, may do that which shall lead many to heaven; but if you decide another way, you may do that which will curse many through time and eternity. Do remember that, and recollect in what a position of responsibility you may be placed many a time in your life, and how needful it is that the grace of God should be with you, to guide you, that you may not be an injury to others by what you do or leave undone.

Once more, notice what great results may come from very little acts. It was a very trifling thing, was it not, to shoot an arrow from a bow? Your child has done it many times in his holidays. He has taken his bow, and shot his little home-made shaft into the air. This is what the king of Israel is required to do, to perform this very slight and common feat of archery, to shoot from an open window, and to drive his arrows into the ground beneath; and yet upon the shooting of these arrows will hang victory or defeat for Israel. So there be some who think that hearing the gospel is a little thing. Life, death, and hell, and worlds unknown, may hang upon the preaching and hearing of a sermon. To hear attentively, and not be disturbed in the sermon, may seem a very insignificant thing; and yet upon the catching of the word may result either the attainment of faith or the absence of faith, and so the salvation that comes by faith. In our affairs that appear to be trifles, we are often shaking worlds. That which looks like a great action may turn out to be a puff-ball, and nothing more;

but a little occasion may prove to be great in its consequences. The mother of mischief is no bigger than a midge's egg; and the beginning of grace is no larger than the mustard-seed. Therefore, do not trifle with little things, for on these little things may hang the greatest things, even the great things of an eternal state.

That lesson seems to me to lie upon the very threshold of our subject to-night; but I cannot detain you on the threshold. We must enter into the theme itself.

I. First, let me speak of SOME MATTERS IN WHICH MANY MEN TOO SOON PAUSE. There are some who, having great opportunities,—and we all have them more or less,—shoot only three times when they ought to shoot five or six times.

One of these matters is in *the warfare with the evil within.* Some, as soon as they begin their Christian life, fit an arrow to the string, and shoot down big sins, such as swearing, or drunkenness, or open uncleanness. When they have shot these three times, they seem to think that the other enemies within them may be tolerated. My brother, thou shouldest have shot five or six times. There remains a bad temper within thee, that must be conquered; or there remains an unforgiving nature, that must be slain. There is no going to heaven with that evil thing alive. Or thou art proud and self-confident. Hast thou not an arrow for that evil, for God hates pride, and so shouldest thou. But certain people say, "Well, you know that is my constitution." Well then, you must be constituted differently, or else you will not get to heaven. "Oh!" says one, "that is my besetting sin." How often is that used as an excuse! If I were to go across Clapham Common to-night, and a dozen men were to come around, and knock me down and rob me, I should be beset by them; but when I stop at home, and ask them into my house, and feast with them, and let them rob me, I cannot talk about being beset, for I have invited them there. Some professors tolerate themselves in sin; I repeat, they tolerate themselves in sin. One says, "Well, you see, I always was so hot-tempered." You must get cool, my brother. Another says, "I was always very irritable." You must get rid of that irritableness, my dear friend; the grace of God should teach you to overcome that evil habit. We sin, but we must not tolerate any sin. It will ruin a man if he sits down, and says, "I cannot overcome that sin." You must overcome it; every sin is to be overcome; and if you have smitten thrice, and stayed, you must not rest satisfied. The man of God to-night will not give you any peace if that is your condition; but he will say to you, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times." There must be a clean sweep of every sin, for Christ has died, not to save us *in* our sins, but to save us *from* our sins.

There are some who shoot three times, and then leave off, with regard to *Christian knowledge.* They know the simple truth of justification by faith; but they do not want to know much about sanctification by the Spirit of God. Why not, my brother? Canst thou be saved unless thou art sanctified? Some are perfectly satisfied with laying again the first principles, always going over those; but they want to know no more. I beseech you, strive to be educated in the things of God. Read not only the first spelling-book, "Believe

and live," but go on to read in the high classics of holiness and communion. Seek to be well established in the faith, and "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." Be a diligent student of the Word; give thyself wholly to it. Lie asoak in divine truth till it colours thee through and through.

Some, again, sin in this way with regard to *Christian attainments*. They have little faith, and they say, "Faith like a grain of mustard-seed will save you." That is true. God forbid that I should discourage the little ones! But are you always to be a little one? A grain of mustard-seed is not worth anything if it does not grow; it is meant to grow till it comes to be a tree, and birds lodge in its boughs. Come, my dear friend, if thou hast little faith, do not rest till thou hast great faith, till thou hast full assurance, till thou hast the full assurance of understanding. Thou lovest Christ; but why not love him more? Thou hast hope; but why not a clearer expectation? Thou hast a little patience; but why not have abundance of grace to endure affliction, and to glory in tribulations also? "Oh, I cannot get to that!" Truly, the man of God is not angry to-night; but he would be a little angry with you if he thought that you meant that utterance. You *can* get to it; you *must* get to it. You are not to be content without the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus; but you are to run, and press forward, and not to be satisfied unless you daily make progress in the divine life.

Others, again, seem satisfied with *little usefulness*. You brought a soul to Christ, did you? Oh, that you would long to bring another! Do you not remember what the general said, in the war, when one rode up to him, and cried out, "We have taken a gun from the enemy"? "Take another," said the general. If you have brought one soul to Christ, it should make you hunger and thirst to bring another. You have been in the Sabbath-school. Keep to it; increase your class, and rest not till all your girls and boys are saved. You preach sometimes in the villages. Preach twice as often; you will do that without knocking yourself up. Some dear friends have only enough grace and enough usefulness to serve as specimens of what they ought to do. I have heard of one who, going to Paris, walked into a restaurant, and asked for a beef-steak. They brought him a little something on a plate, and he took it all up upon his fork at once, and said, "Yes, that is the kind of thing; bring me some of that." Some people's usefulness just serves for a mouthful to a really earnest person. We say to such, "Yes, that is the right sort of thing; bring us some of that." Why are you not doing much more? Thou hast done more than some others, but why dost thou stay at the third shot? "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times."

And this spirit comes out very vividly in *prayer*. You do pray; else were you not the living children of God at all; but oh, for more power in prayer! You have asked for a blessing; why not ask for a far greater one? We want more Christians of the type of the importunate widow; they have become very scarce nowadays. I should like to see that woman's successors, those who will not let the King go unless he blesses them, who lay hold upon the angel, as Jacob did,

and wrestle all night until they get a blessing. Thou hast done well to pray; but thou shouldest have prayed much more. What blessings are waiting, what treasures are in the hand of God, ready for the man who can bend his knee, and stay at the mercy-seat till he wins his suit with God!

The Church of God, as a whole, is guilty here, as to her *plans for God's glory*. She is doing much more now than she used to do; but even now, though she smites three times, we may say to her, "Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times." Oh, that the Church of Christ had a boundless ambition to conquer the world for her Lord! Oh, that we never rested day nor night till our neighbours knew the Saviour, till sinners of every class were made to know that there is a God in Israel! Upstart you, you who have done so little, churches that have been satisfied with now and then stirring the baptismal pool, and the adding of half-a-dozen in a year! Oh, for cries to God, and labours for God, of a very different sort from those of the past!

My time would fail me if I dwelt on this point. You will all think of many matters in which we begin well, and then we stay.

II. But now, secondly, let me speak of THE REASONS FOR THIS PAUSING. Why do men come to a dead halt so soon?

Some of them say that *they are afraid of being presumptuous*. You are afraid of being too holy, are you? Dismiss your fear. You are afraid of asking for too much grace; be afraid of having too little. You are afraid of conquering sin; tremble for fear of an unconquered sin. There is no presumption in taking the largest promise of God, and pleading it, and expecting to have it fulfilled.

Perhaps one says, "*I have not the natural ability* to be doing more, or enjoying more." What has natural ability to do with it? When all thy natural abilities are in the grave, and thou lookest only to the spiritual strength of God, then thou shalt see greater things than these. Talk not so, I pray you. Another says, "Well, *I am getting old*, I cannot shoot as I used to do." Well, dear friend, if you want to get old, the surest way is to get old. I mean this. Think that you cannot do what you used to do, and give up your religious engagements because you are getting so old; give up preaching because you are so old; give up the Sunday-school because you are so old; and you will be old fast enough: that is the sure way to make yourself old. Look at our statesmen, and notice to what an age they still continue working. One reason is because they do work on; if they gave up, they would have to give up. If we will but persevere, we shall prove that there is life in the old dogs yet. We can do something yet in the cause of God even though the hair does turn grey, and the voice is getting weak. Let us not make an excuse out of our age until it really does prevent us from doing our work for him: then we must take to something else that we can do to serve the Lord, and so bring forth fruit even in old age.

Shall I tell you the real reasons why men pause in their work? With some, it is because *they are too dependent upon their fellow-men*. This king Joash could shoot when Elisha put his hand on his hand; probably Elisha only did that once, and then left him to himself, and said, "Now, you shoot." Then he only shot three times. There are

many Christian people, who are a great deal too dependent upon their ministers, or upon some elderly Christian person who has helped them onward. When he is dead and gone, or when he has moved away, then they do not shoot any more. I want you, dear friends, not to have to be carried all your days. We do not object to be nursing fathers and nursing mothers to the children; but we want you who are grown up to run alone. What would any father here think if he had to carry his boy when he was six-and-twenty? It is time, I think, that he went on his feet. There are some church-members who still want always to have the influence of somebody who is a superintendent to them, just as Elisha was to Joash in his shooting. Do not let it be so with you; but shoot away, God helping you, and keep on shooting till your arrows are all gone.

Another reason why some pause is, that they are *too soon contented.* Joash thought that he had done very well when he had shot three times, and that Elisha would pat him on the back, and say, "How well you have done!" That kind of feeling creeps over many workers for the Lord. They fancy that they have done their share; they have had their time; now they will let somebody else take a turn. And they have done the work so well, too! Ah, yes, the power to do more oozes out by the leakage of contentment with what you have done! We have done nothing well enough to say, "It is finished." Still is there much more land to be possessed; and, in the name of God, let us banish from our hearts all contentment with our attainments, or with our services, and let us do much more than we have yet attempted for that dear Lord, who has bought us with his precious blood.

Joash, too, I dare say, gave up shooting because *he was unbelieving.* He could not see how shooting the arrows could affect the Syrians; and he wanted to see. Oh, brothers and sisters, we do not any of us believe enough in God! Believe in God to the uttermost. Thus will you be successful workers, and accomplish great things for God. No man knows the possibilities that lie at his feet. It is impossible to measure them; only unbelief can contract them. Remember that even Christ could not do many mighty works in his own country because of the people's unbelief; and nothing stops us from doing work for him like unbelief in the ever-blessed One.

I should not wonder, also, if Joash was *too indolent* to shoot five or six times. He did not feel in a shooting humour. Now, whenever you do not feel in a humour for prayer, then is the time when you ought to pray twice as much. If you do not feel in a humour to take your class, say to yourself, "You shall do it well to-day. I will make you do so, poor lazy flesh of mine!" I heard of a person who, being weary in walking to the meeting-house, stopped, and said to his legs, "Come, you have carried me a good many miles to the theatre, and I will make you carry me to the house of God!" So may we say to ourselves and to one another, "We were active enough when we ran to our amusements, and went with the giddy multitude to do evil; and we will be active now in the service of our God." None of us will ever get to heaven on a feather-bed; no, it is a marching pilgrimage from this place to the gates of pearl.

Joash also probably had *too little zeal.* He was not wide awake, he

was not thoroughly aroused, he did not care for the glory of God. If he could beat the Syrians three times, that would be quite enough for him. He thought that they would have had enough of it, too; and so he laid down his bow and his arrows. I wonder whether I am speaking to anybody who has just been putting up his bow and arrows, some brother who has made up his mind that he will retire from the school, or one who has so much to do in the world that he must give up that village-station. If so, turn this subject over, and ask yourselves whether you were not sent in here to-night on purpose to be told that you ought to have shot five or six times, and done much more than you have done. God does speak to men here often; and very pointedly sometimes. Some have written to me to know who told me all about them, when I never heard about them in my life. God does speak to men's consciences by his servants; and I put it to every child of God here whether this is not a message from the excellent glory, "Keep on; keep on as long as there is life in you; keep on growing in grace, and advancing in the service of Christ."

III. But now, thirdly, and very briefly, notice THE LAMENTABLE RESULT OF THIS PAUSING.

When Joash had shot three times, he paused; and therefore *the blessing paused.* Three times he shot, and three times God gave him victory. Do you see what you are doing by pausing? You are stopping the conduit-pipe by which the river of blessing will flow to you. Do not do that; to impoverish yourself must certainly be a needless operation.

You will suffer in consequence, as this king did; for, after the three victories, the rival power came to the front again. You will suffer in many ways if you cease to draw daily supplies of grace from God, or cease to shoot the arrows against sin.

Others will also suffer with you. All Israel was the worse for Joash leaving the arrows unshot. Your children, your neighbours, your friends; who can tell how many may suffer because you are slack in grace, and in the service of the God of grace?

Meanwhile, *the enemy triumphed.* There is joy in hell when a saint grows idle; there is gladness among devils when we cease to pray, when we become slack in faith, and feeble in communion with God.

What was even worse, *Jehovah himself was dishonoured.* The worshippers of false gods triumphed over Israel, and the infinitely-glorious Jehovah did not manifest his might as he would otherwise have done. Let us not rob God of his glory, for that is the worst of robberies; but let us so live that as much glory as is possible may be gotten out of such poor creatures as we are by the ever-blessed God.

Yet again, *glorious possibilities were lost.* See what glorious possibilities lie before you; and do not let them lie there untouched. If you were poor, and there was a gold mine in your field at home, which only wanted the use of a spade to make you rich, would you not be sorry that you had neglected it so long? Behold, the blessed promises of God are before you! You children of God may be rich, and blessed, and happy; will you leave this mine unworked? You sinners, who as yet have only begun to seek the Saviour, seek him more earnestly, cling more closely to Christ, and you will soon get the

blessing. Shall it be your own hand that locks you out of the kingdom? Suffer it not to be so.

IV. I am warned by the time that I must close; but I must say a few words about THE CURE FOR THIS PAUSING.

If we pause in our holy service, or in getting near to God, or in sucking the marrow out of the promises, remember that *the enemy will not pause.* You cannot make the drink traffic stop; you cannot make the harlotry of London stop its temptations; you cannot make the infidels stop; you cannot make the "Down-graders" stop. They will all be at it, with all their might, seeking to do mischief against the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ; and there is the same choice for you that the Scotch captain put to his men; "Lads," said he, "you see the enemy there; if you don't kill them, they will kill you." If you do not overthrow the powers of evil, the powers of evil will overthrow you. Oh, that God would give us to have no hesitation about our choice; but may we continue, by the power of the Spirit, to shoot the arrows of God's deliverance till Christ himself shall come!

A cure for this stopping lies in the reflection that *in other things we are generally eager.* If a man engages in business, he is all alive in it; if a man takes to a certain study, he will weary himself that he may understand it; and shall we do the work of the Lord half-heartedly, and, in matters of grace, slur over things, and only do as little as ever we can? The Lord save us from this spirit! A little religion is a very dangerous thing; drink deep if you would come to the sweetness of it. It is bitter at the top; but when you drink it to the very depths, the lees thereof are the choicest cordial for a fainting spirit. God grant us to know the inner core of religion, for that is where the sweetness lies!

And lastly, this question ought to prevent us from ever pausing, *Can we ever do enough for our Saviour?* Did he stop anywhere? Did he cry a halt when the work was half done? Did he not set his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem? When the scourges fell, he did not turn back, and leave us. When the nails were driven into his hands and feet, he did not desert us. When he came to be forsaken of the Father, he did not forsake us; but he went through with his work till he could say, "It is finished." Oh, that we might each of us resolve that we would go through with our work, saying, "I have lifted my hand unto the Lord, and I cannot go back"! May every Christian man and woman say the same!

And you who have not yet believed in Christ, may you be brought to believe in him who died for the guilty! Surrender yourself to him who died upon the tree; and having done so, when he looks upon you, and says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," look up to him, and say, "I bless thee for that sweet word, my Lord, and now I will serve thee all the days of my life." May the Quickening Spirit add the divine quickening to these feeble words, and set you all shooting five or six times, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

2 KINGS XIII.

Verses 1, 2. *In the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the* LORD, *and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.*

"Seventeen years"—that is a long time in which to do mischief. Seventeen years of reigning over a people, influencing them all for mischief, turning them aside from God, and doing his utmost to erase the name of Jehovah from the hearts of the people. Remember, this Jehoahaz was the son of Jehu, who had been called to the front because of the sins of the house of Ahab. Though Jehu was brought forward to be a reformer, yet he and his race were as bad as those who were cast out. What a sad thing this is, when those who are planted where the cumber-ground tree used to be become just as barren as the one that has been cut down, or are only fruitful in sour fruit!

See here the force of evil example. It was many years since Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had set up the calves at Bethel and Dan; yet here is another king walking in his footsteps. You cannot tell, if you leave a bad example behind, how your children, and your grandchildren to distant generations, may follow your evil footsteps. Bad examples are very vital; they live on age after age; and influence others long after the first transgressor is dead. The thought that we may be ruining those who are yet unborn, should keep us back from sin.

Notice also, at the end of the second verse, "He departed not therefrom." There is a final perseverance in sin; some men seem to prove it: "He departed not therefrom." He was warned against it; he was chastened for it; but "he departed not therefrom." If men hold on in sin, how much more ought the people of God to hold on in righteousness! Whatever happens to you when you are once in the good old way, may it be said of you, "He departed not therefrom." If all other men should turn aside, yet let that be said of you, "He departed not therefrom." But, if you are in the wrong road, may the Lord cause you to turn from it, and to turn to himself at once! If you depart not from evil, you must depart from God.

3. *And the anger of the* LORD *was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days.*

God's people cannot sin without coming under chastisement. Remember this word of the Lord, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." If you become church-members, and yet live unholy lives, you come under a special discipline, a discipline which I plainly see to be going on in the Church of God even to this day. "For this cause," said Paul of the church in Corinth, "many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." No doubt God does send many rods to his rebellious family. He is not one of those fathers who "spare the rod, and spoil the child." Hazael and Ben-hadad were both wicked men; yet God used them as rods to chastise his sinning people.

4. *And Jehoahaz besought the* LORD, *and the* LORD *hearkened unto him:*

Bad as he was, he knew the hand that smote him, and he besought Jehovah. What a wonder it is that God does hear the prayers of even wicked men! I have heard it said, sometimes, that "the prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto God." There is no such passage as that in the Scripture. It is "the sacrifice of the wicked" that is "abomination to the Lord." Even when a wicked man cries unto God, and even if his prayer be not a spiritual

and acceptable prayer, yet God may hear it in a measure, as he did in this case. Sometimes that hearing of prayer leads men to repentance; and they then pray better prayers, and receive greater blessings.

4. *For he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.*

God cannot bear to see the sorrows of his own people. Even when he himself is laying on the rod, if his child cries, it goes to his heart. Remember what he did to Pharaoh when he heard the sighing and crying of his people in Egypt. There is nothing more powerful with a father's heart than the tears of his child; and God heard the prayers of this bad man because "He saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them."

5. (*And the* LORD *gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as beforetime.*

The Lord gave them deliverance from the cruel fetters of the Syrians. They had been so tormented, so plundered, so oppressed in every way, that God had pity upon them, and gave them peace.

6. *Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)*

Israel's repentance was only half-hearted; they repented because they suffered. They repented because of the suffering rather than because of the sin. They went back to the sin after they escaped from the sorrow. Oh, be not so, my hearer! If God has chastened thee on account of sin, let thine be a thorough repentance. Go to God with hatred of thy sin; for until thou dost get rid of sin, thy being rid of sorrow will be a small blessing.

7. *Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.*

God helped them and delivered them; but they were brought very, very low. If God's people sin, their deliverance will cost them dearly. Israel was once a great and powerful nation; their armies went forth in vast hosts; but now they have only the remnant of an army.

8. *Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

They were not worth writing in the Scriptures. We have very slender records concerning Jehoahaz; but quite enough for such a wicked man.

9—11. *And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead. In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the* LORD;

One sinner was followed by another. This young man must have seen the mischief that his father's idolatry brought on the people; but he went on in the same evil way. Oh, you sons of godly parents, you ought to follow your fathers' footsteps, for these wicked sons of wicked men followed their fathers' evil example! Oh, that there were an inclination in all the children of the godly to be like their parents, for there is evidently a tendency in the heart of the children of the ungodly to be like their sires!

11. *He departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: but he walked therein.*

I repeat what I said before, what a mischievous thing is one evil example! When a man makes another sin, the other who sins is guilty, and the man who makes him sin is a sharer in his guilt. Here is Jeroboam, dead for years, and

yet he keeps on sinning. I may say of him, "He, being dead, yet sinneth." His sin goes on burning like a fire; and surely the punishment continues if the sin continues. As long as souls exist, sin will exist; you cannot stop it. Sin will repeat itself again and again, and multiply in its repetition spreading among thousands perhaps yet unborn. Oh, what an evil thing is sin! Prove to me that sin ever ceases to operate, and you might give me some thought that the punishment will cease; but that can never be; and, as long as sin continues to poison, God will continue to punish.

12, 13. *And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.*

Now, here is a story about this Joash which is preserved to us.

14. *Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died.*

An old man, probably in his ninetieth year; he had served his generation well. We read nothing of him for five and forty years; he seems to have been in comparative seclusion; perhaps in his old age he had been neglected and forgotten, as many a man of God has been who once stood in the front rank. Elisha has fallen mortally sick at last, and he is about to go home.

14. *And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him,*

This is one good thing that Joash did. He remembered that it was through Elijah and Elisha that the men of his house, the house of Jehu, had been put upon the throne; and when he heard that Elisha was dying, something like compunction crossed his heart, and he "came down unto him."

14. *And wept over his face,*

As Bishop Hall says, he gave him some drops of warm water; and if a cup of cold water, given to a prophet, shall not be without its reward, so neither shall those tender tears be without their reward.

14. *And said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.*

Elisha must have opened his eyes when he heard those words, for he recollected that those were nearly the last words that he said to Elijah when his master was taken up to heaven. Perhaps the king had heard that; and, with a kind of delicate thoughtfulness, he applied the words to this grand old man, who was now about to die. He was to Israel chariot and horsemen, for it was by his means that Israel had been delivered.

15, 16. *And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.*

Not because he could lend much strength, for he was an old man; but because this signified that God would be with the king, that the power which dwelt in the prophet's God would come through the prophet's hands to help the king.

17. *And he said, Open the window eastward.*

They had no glass windows in those days, you know; but they threw back the iron bars that made the shutter, and opened the window eastward.

17. *And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the* LORD'S *deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.*

It was usual, in the East, when war was proclaimed, to do it by shooting an arrow towards the enemy's country; and this brave old man, soon about

to breathe out his life, had strengthened the king in the great weakness of the Israelitish state to proclaim war once more against Syria.

18. *And he said, Take the arrows. And he took them.*

I suppose, a quiver full.

18. *And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground.*

"Shoot the arrows out of the window, and let them strike into the ground, and stick there."

18, 19. *And he smote thrice, and stayed. And the man of God was wroth with him,*

Elisha was angry; but he did not sin. He loved the people, and he was grieved to think that the king was so slack and slothful.

19, 20. *And said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice. And Elisha died, and they buried him.*

God has different ways of taking his people home. Some go on a sudden, whirled away, as Elijah was. This prophet died gently, worn out with age; but there is something very beautiful about his death. A king weeps over his aged face. He has the pleasure, though it was mingled with pain, of helping to deliver his people; and, after his death, God bore full witness to him.

20, 21. *And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.*

Thus God gave Elisha power, even after death, and certainly set the divine seal upon his message. It was as great a glory to him to give life to the dead as it was to Elijah to pass to heaven without dying at all.

22, 23. *But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant—*

Ah, that is what always lies at the bottom of God's mercy, "his covenant." Oh, that grand word "covenant"! Some think very little of it, few preach much about it; but this is the very foundation of mercy. This is "the deep that lieth under", out of which all the wells of grace spring up.

23. *With Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.*

He would not do it till he was fully driven to it, till provocation upon provocation should wear out his patience.

24, 25. *So Hazael king of Syria died; and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.*

He shot three arrows, and now it came to pass that three times did Joash beat Ben-hadad, and recover the cities of Israel. Oh, that he had beaten the king of Syria six times, and set Israel completely free from its enemy!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—678, 677, 685.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

BLINDED BY SATAN.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 16TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, March 31st, 1889.

"The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not."—2 Corinthians iv. 4.

THE practice of blinding men is a horrible process, too horrible for us to say another word about it; but there is also a spiritual blindness which comes upon some men. These are, to begin with, unbelievers. The god of this world does not blind believers; but he blinds the minds of them which believe not. It is, therefore, a very dangerous thing not to believe on the Son of God. The penalty of unbelief is death and condemnation; and that penalty begins to fall on men when, in consequence of their unbelief, their foolish heart is darkened, their intellect loses the power to perceive spiritual objects, and the god of this world blinds their mental vision. Ah, my hearers, how anxious Satan is to secure your destruction, since, rather than that you should see the saving light, he takes the trouble to blind your eyes! God grant that no man here may die under this dreadful deprivation of light, which is caused by Satanic influence upon the minds of men who have not believed in Jesus!

Remember that this blindness to spiritual things is quite consistent with much sharpness as to natural things. A man may be a very keen politician; he may be a first-rate man of business; he may be an eminent scientist, a profound thinker, and yet he may be blinded as to spiritual truths. How often is it true, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"! As an old writer says, "Poor, ignorant men often find the door to heaven, and enter in, while the learned are looking for the latch." Yes, a man may have clear eyes for worldly things; he may be very keen as to his insight into the problems of life; and yet the God of this world may have blinded his eyes.

What is more remarkable still, a man may have much Scriptural knowledge; he may understand, in the letter, the things of the kingdom

of God; he may be very orthodox in his beliefs, and may be able to give an answer to those who ask him what he believes, and why he believes; but still he may have no spiritual perception of the reality of these things. A person may know something of botany from books, and he may even understand the Linnæan system of classifying plants; but he may never, after all, have seen the primrose by the river's brim, nor have gathered a single flower out of the garden. He is a poor botanist, is he not? He who has studied natural history in his own chamber, but has never seen a living animal, knows very little about the subject after all. We have many round about us, who can talk of heaven and hell, and sin and salvation, and Christ and the Holy Spirit, who nevertheless have never had one true perception of the meaning of any of these words. They see, but perceive not; they hear, but do not understand; they are unbelievers, and the god of this world has blinded their minds.

Now, I am going to say to-night, first, that *this blindness is very common;* secondly, that *it is wrought by the evil one upon men in different ways;* and, thirdly, I shall speak upon *the kind of treatment that this blindness requires.*

I. First, then, THIS BLINDNESS IS VERY COMMON.

It is manifested in some by *occupation with this world.* Here is a man, who has lived in this world for a good many years; and all that while he has been thinking, working, proposing, projecting, but what about? Why, about this world! He has generally been concerned with a trinity of questions—"What shall I eat? What shall I drink? Wherewithal shall I be clothed?" This man believes that he is to live for ever in another world, that this present life is only like the porch of a house, but that the state to come is the house itself. All these years, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy—may I say eighty years?—this man has never thought about the eternal world, but only about the temporary world; he has never thought about where he is to dwell for ever, but has spent all his power and strength upon the passage to it. This is so unreasonable that I am sure he must be blind; I cannot account for his folly anyhow else. Surely, the soul is more important than the body. We think more of the body than we do of the garment it wears; but the body, after all, is only the garment of the soul; the true *ego*, the I, myself, is my soul. Am I never to think of that, but only to be thinking of my earthly house, my food, my garments, my daily work? That is the kind of thing that a brute would think of; oxen and asses think of what they shall eat, and what they shall drink, and where they shall lie down, if they think at all; and is this all of which you and I think? Surely, that occupation of the mind upon what must be of secondary consideration is a proof that the god of this world hath blinded the mind.

I will give you another token, from a different quarter, and that is, the *extreme easiness of conscience* which we see in many men and women. They can commit a great sin, wash their hands, and then have done with it, as if the very washing of the hand or the wiping of the mouth was quite enough to put away all thought of the wrong. Many will sit here to-night, who have, through a long life, committed a hundred sins of which they would be ashamed to be reminded, and yet they are

not ashamed of them. They would only be ashamed to be found out; they are not ashamed of the sin itself. A man truly awakened by the Spirit of God feels the remembrance of his sin to sting him as with scorpions. He cannot bear it. But the great mass of people do a thousand wrong things, and yet they are not troubled, but feel quite at their ease. Some of you are probably within a very short time of death and judgment, and yet you can make sport of sin. How often does it happen that people come to the place of worship, and go their way, having rejected solemn appeals: and they will never hear any more! They have had their last warning. Oh, if they could but know that, during the week, they will fall down dead, or be laid aside by sickness, never to leave the bed again! Yet they trifle, on the brink of fate, on the very verge of everlasting woe. If you saw a man going straight on to the very brink of some dreadful precipice, and you saw him about to take another step, you would say, "That man is blind. I am sure that he is, or else he would not act like that." People do not go into terrible danger with their eyes open; yet there are many of our fellow-men, perhaps many of ourselves, going right on, carelessly and heedlessly, to the very brink of the awful abyss without a thought of danger. They must be blind. This horrible peace of conscience, this quenching of the Spirit whenever conscience does stir itself, this playing and trifling with death and judgment, prove that they are blind.

To give you another specimen, there are many who have *presumptuous hopes about the future;* at any rate, they do not trouble themselves. I do not know why they are so easy; but there are different forms of presumption which enable them to look into the future without fear. One says, "Well, you see, I was christened when I was a child, and I was confirmed as a youth." Another says, "I have always attended the meeting-house. I am never absent from any of the services. I have subscribed my guinea to the hospital. I am kind to everybody. I think that most people would give me a good name." Their dependence is on that sort of thing; and they have never looked at what is really wanting. They will not stay to hear that word, "Ye must be born again." They will not listen to Christ when he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," whatever his profession or moral character may be. No; but they go on dancing to destruction with a light and merry heart. Surely these people are blinded by Satan.

Then see another sort of people, and note their *readiness to sin.* They yield to the tempter, they yield at the first request; there is no need for Satan to importune them to evil. They seem always ready for it, especially if they think that they can escape from trouble by doing wrong. Why, are there not many persons who would tell a lie to save a sixpence? Ah! to save a penny? The shop was open this morning; the profit made did not amount to twopence, but still the Sabbath was broken for that paltry sum. How many are selling their souls, not to gain the whole world, nay, not to gain a fourpenny piece! They think so little of their souls, and their eternal destiny, that, for the sake of a drop of beer, for the sake of an evening's amusement for the sake of pleasing a foolish companion, they will

fling their souls away, as if they were only pebble stones not worth the keeping. Ah, sirs, such people must be blind! People who have had their eyes opened spiritually have been known to die sooner than do the least thing that was wrong. Remember the man who was told that, if he would give one farthing to be spent in incense to the heathen gods, his life should be spared; but the man knew the Lord, and therefore he would sooner die than give a single mite towards the worship of idols. Men of God have cheerfully laid down their lives to defend even a slight point of God's eternal truth; but these men who think nothing of such holy heroism, and are willing to lose their souls for a paltry pleasure, why, they must be blind!

I need not stay to say more except this one thing. This blindness shows itself in *trifling with eternal things*. There is a person here who, not long ago, was very greatly aroused and awakened, even resolved to seek the Saviour there and then; but when in the enquiry-room he put off the final decision. There was no reason why he should put it off, except the reluctance of his mind to accept Christ. That was not the first time that he had procrastinated, and postponed; yet he is still putting off his reception of Christ. He is not sure that he will live to get home to-night; he is not certain that, should he fall asleep to-night on his bed, he will wake up in this world in the morning; yet he leaves his soul in jeopardy, as if it were a matter of very small concern. A person came here, not long ago, who had taken off a diamond ring when he washed his hands; and all the while he was sitting here, he kept wondering what would become of that ring, whether, when they emptied the water out of the basin, it would be thrown away. He was so anxious about his ring, that he hurried home as quickly as ever he could after the service; he did not wait a week to see about it; yet there are here men who have waited weeks, months, years, ah, many years, procrastinating, and procrastinating! They would not leave their worldly business like that; but they leave the eternal business of salvation or damnation as though it were but as a sere leaf that might be blown whichever way the wind might please. Such people must be blind; I am sure they must be blind. Oh, that they were wise enough to cry, in the language of Charles Wesley's hymn,—

> "O God, my inmost soul convert,
> And deeply on my thoughtful heart
> Eternal things impress;
> Give me to feel their solemn weight,
> And trembling on the brink of fate,
> Wake me to righteousness!"

I could heap up many proofs that this blindness is very common; but I have not the time to do so, for we must pass on to consider the next point.

II. Secondly, I want to prove to you, very earnestly and very pointedly, that THIS BLINDNESS IS WROUGHT BY THE EVIL ONE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

In some, it comes *by utter worldliness*. There are some people who say, "We cannot attend to that matter; we have enough to do to earn our living." Others say, "Well, thank God, we have not to earn our

living by the sweat of our brow; but really we have plenty of other things to think of besides turning our attention to that Methodistic stuff." One says, "I—, I—," yes, you may speak it out if you like, you think that God and heaven and eternal things are trifles unworthy of your thoughts. Your house, your horse, your wife, your money, these, of course, are not trifles; these must come first. The world, the world, the world, this is in your heart, and occupies it all. Said the captain of a whaler, one day, to a man of God, who spoke to him about his soul, "Mr. Bertram, it is of no use for you to speak to me about my soul, or ask me to come to the service to-night. You see, I am out here after whales; and all the while that I was sitting, and you were talking, I should be thinking about whales; and when you gave out a hymn, I should just be thinking of whether there was a whale anywhere about. If I were to pray, I should be praying about whales. I have whales in my heart, sir; and there is no room for anything else." It is so with many, many people. They have their business, they have set up a loom, they have an invention, they have all the materials of a building inside their hearts; and there is no room for God. Their hearts are blinded by utter worldliness.

Some, again, are blinded by the devil in a very desperate way, *by love of some favourite sin.* I do not hesitate to say it is a general fact that, when men kick against true religion, and when they get offended by being spoken to about it, if you could track them home, you would find in their conduct some very good reason for their opposition. I recollect that, in preaching on one occasion, I happened to allude to the pleasure it gave me to see the gleaners picking up the wheat in the harvest-time, as Ruth did, and I said, "I verily believe that there are some farmers who would rake their fields with a small tooth comb, if they could, to get every grain of the wheat up." I noticed a respectable-looking gentleman, in the front of the gallery, get up, and go out. Somebody at the door said, "Why are you going out, Mr. ———?" He replied, "I won't stop to listen to such a fellow as that. I always rake my fields three times." Yes, you see, it was the truth that made him angry; it is usually so. There is a reason for men being wroth with the gospel, and turning away from it, when it strikes at some of their favourite sins. Such and such a man says that he does not believe in Jesus Christ. It is not likely that he should; I will not tell you why, but his wife knows. There is another man who keeps a shop. He says that he does not want to be converted. No; if he were, he could not keep that shop; or if he did, he would have to alter the line of business in which he is engaged. Ah, the god of this world blinds men's eyes with sin! I cannot go into all the particulars; but if there is any man here who has a pet sin that he cherishes, do not let him wonder that he cannot see the beauties of Christ, or the glories of salvation; and let him not think that we would do anything to win his approbation while he remains in love with that sin. It is with us very much as it was with Martin Luther when he said, "I could be proud to think how badly some people speak of me; for them to speak badly of me, is the highest honour that such as they are can confer upon me." When you who are living in unchastity and dishonesty speak badly of Christ and of

Christians, you only speak after your own manner; and we cannot wish you to alter your tone till God has changed your heart.

Many are blinded as to the things of God *by following a party.* "Well," you say, "I could not begin to study these matters of religion, because I am linked in with such a set. I know how they would treat me; they would laugh at me first, and they would give me the cold shoulder next. No, really, my dear sir, if you knew how I am connected, you would not expect me ever to give any consideration to these doctrines that are preached, whether they be true or not." It is a pity, it is a solemn pity, that a man should ruin his soul to keep in with his party. I rejoiced to read of the praise that was passed, in the House of Commons, the other night, upon John Bright, who deserved much more than was said, especially upon this one point, that, whenever his conscience came in conflict with his party, he followed his conscience, and let his party go where it might. Public approbation and applause were nothing to him so long as he could keep clear in the sight of God by doing what he believed to be right. Now, when he dies, every party has a word of honour for him. There is nothing lost, after all, by sticking to what you believe to be right; and if it be so in politics, how much more should it be so in the matter of religion! Cut your sinful connections, quit your evil companions. It were better to do that than to go with them, applauded and approved, and find yourself wrong at last. Oh, that men had but a grain of grit in them, so that they would never make the things of God, and heaven, and eternal realities, to hang upon the breath of men's nostrils, or the smiles or frowns of their fellow-men! But I am afraid that a great many will never come to know Christ, because they will continue to follow their party, or the prejudice of their early education still clings to them.

A fourth way in which Satan blinds a great many, and he does it very commonly, is *by raising objections to the truth.* There is nothing in this world to which you cannot object. I venture to say that there is no fact, however palpable to all the senses, but what you can, if you like, find reasons for not believing it to be a fact. If somebody were to assert that I am not here, and that I am not speaking, I have no doubt that, with proper pay, a lawyer could be found to prove it; and what a lawyer could do, a great many, who are not learned in the law, could do as well. To answer objections, is an endless task; it is like trying to empty a flowing fountain with bottomless buckets. Men do not object to the religion of Jesus Christ really and truly. It is not this to which they object; but they invent objections, they go abroad searching after objections that they may then have an excuse for rejecting Christ. In this way many prove that they are blind; they have a difficulty they cannot get over, and do not mean to get over either; and so they see not Christ.

With others, blindness is wrought *by wrong inferences.* It is astonishing how many eyes are blinded by wrong inferences drawn from truth. We have known one say, "Well, the mercy of God is very great; it is universal: therefore, I am sure that God will not cast us into hell." This is a wicked lie derived from a great truth. Another says, "I read that God has an elect people." That is most

surely true; but not the inference that is drawn from it; "Therefore, if I am to be saved, I shall be saved; and if I am to be lost, I shall be lost; so that I need not trouble my head about the subject." That is another false inference deduced from a great truth. When a man means to commit suicide, any rope will do; and when a sinner is resolved to perish, he can always find an argument, fetched even from the truth of God itself, as the means of his own destruction. I am not going to answer any of these lies; but only to say that, by these false inferences, many a man has been blinded to his own eternal ruin.

Then there is another way of being blinded, and a very common one, too; that is, *by general conceit of knowledge*. I know a man stone blind of it. When I met him last, he looked at me, condescended to ask how I was, and he as much as intimated that he was prepared for a little conversation with an inferior person occasionally, and therefore he did not mind speaking about religion with me, he himself being a very superior person indeed, knowing everything, and, if possible, a few things besides. This man called himself an agnostic; and when a man says that he is an agnostic, he is an ignoramus, that is, a person who knows nothing; yet such a man usually talks as if he knew everything, and the appendix at the end of that. He mentions Calvinism, and he says, in a tone of contempt, that his grandmother was a Calvinist! He says that he remembers the Evangelical school, but that they have nearly died out now. You have not talked long with him before you discover that the Lord Jesus Christ and he could never get on together, because the Saviour has said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and this man will never become a little child, not he! If you want the antipodes of a little child, there you have the gentleman; and he wishes you "Good afternoon," when you begin to quote Scripture. He is not at all the person to receive any instruction of that sort. The "superior" person will always be lost, take my word for it. The more superior he is, the more sure he is to be lost; I mean not that he is superior, but that he thinks himself so, superior to all teaching. He is not prepared to be a learner, he is ready to set up as a teacher, and a master of anything you like. He is not the kind of man to enter the gates of heaven; he carries his head too high for that. He is a man of broad thought; and, of course, he goes the broad way. Narrow-minded people go in the narrow way; but then it leadeth unto life eternal, and therefore I commend it unto you.

> "Broad is the road that leads to death,
> And thousands walk together there;
> But wisdom shows a narrower path,
> With here and there a traveller."

We have another set of people who are blinded *by some special conceit of false grace*. Here is a man who has attended to many duties. Some, of course, he does not care about; but he compounds for duties he does not like by attending to others that are to his taste. He does not pray; but then he sings in the choir! Communion with God—he does

not know anything about that; but he takes the sacrament! He has never repented of sin; but then he has found fault with other people for their sins, and he regards that as almost as good! He does not help the poor and needy; but then he has a capital plan for lowering the poor-rates! He is always doing some good thing or other, of a sort; but not of the sort that Scripture prescribes. As to believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, by a living faith trusting him, that is beyond his range. As to seeking a new heart and a right spirit, and being converted, and turned from darkness to light, he does not know anything about that; but there has been, after all, a very great improvement in him. He has given up some very questionable practices; and, on the whole, he has done a good deal which ought to be spoken of with considerable commendation. This is the kind of gentleman who is blinded by the god of this world.

But it is idle for me to talk about people being blinded except to those who can see; for the blindest man is the man who says that he is not blind, who will not have it that he does not see everything aright, even though he has never had his eyes opened by the Lord. He says that he always could see; it is an insult to suppose that he is blind. He is like the Pharisees, who said to Jesus, "Are we blind also?" to whom Jesus answered, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." This is sinning against the light; this is sinning with a vengeance. May God preserve all of us from such a sin!

III. Now I come to the most practical point, that is, THE KIND OF TREATMENT THAT THIS BLINDNESS REQUIRES. I pray God to bless to you what I have to say upon this matter.

I should say, first, dear friends, *beware lest this blindness be sent as a punishment.* Although our blind friends have our loving sympathy, and God blesses them, yet it must be a great calamity to be without their eyesight. Now, blindness of heart is not only a sin, but it is the punishment of sin; and it comes to many as the result of violating conscience, resisting the Holy Spirit, trifling with solemn things, and being desperately set on mischief. Oh, you who have a tender conscience, mind that you do not lose it! You who have the power to sit and hear a sermon, and to feel it, do not trifle with that holy sensitiveness. Once lost, so that you can read the Book of books, and hear the most earnest talk, and yet feel nothing, you have lost one of the greatest privileges that you ever had. May God help the man who is going on towards this fatal blindness, and stop him before he gets any further!

I would say, also, to you who are in any way blind, *beware lest that blindness becomes the herald of your' doom.* Before Haman was hanged, the first thing that the servants did was to cover his face; and when a man is about to be lost for ever, the first thing that the devil does is to blind his eyes so that he cannot see. Now the poor blind Samson will make sport for the Philistines; now they hope that they can kill him whenever they please. Beware of a blinded conscience; it is the prelude of eternal destruction. God save you from it!

Next, *if you have even a little light, value it greatly.* If any one of us should be gradually losing his eyesight, I know that he would greatly

prize the little sight that he had. How often have I spoken to a friend who has said, "*This* eye is quite gone, sir; there is just a little light left in *this* one, and the doctor says that I must wear a shade, and be very careful, or I may lose that." Oh, take care of the little light you have! If you can feel a little, be very tender of that feeling. If you can see a little of the beauty of Christ, be very jealous over that sight. Have I not often said that he who has starlight, if he thanks God for starlight, and uses it, will get moonlight; and he who has moonlight, and thanks God for it, and uses it, will get sunlight; and he who has the sunlight shall yet come to that light which is as of seven days in the glorious presence of God? Take care, then, of any light that you have.

And then, the next thing is, if you are at all conscious of your blindness, but do not see the full evil of sin, do not see the glory of Christ, and do not perceive the way of salvation, *confess your blindness.* Go home to-night; and, in your chamber, alone, acknowledge that you do not see what you ought to see, and do not feel what you ought to feel. Show your sightless eyeballs to the Saviour, who gives sight to the blind. Do not cloak your sin; confess it. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Say with David, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;" so shall you also be able to say with him, "and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

When you have confessed your blindness, do one thing more, *trust to the Lord Jesus to open your blind eyes.* Put yourself consciously into the presence of the divine Saviour, and say to him, "I believe that thou art able to work this miracle of mercy. I believe that thou canst make me see the truth, and feel the truth. I believe that thou canst make me see thyself, and trust thyself. Here are my eyes. Lord, I would receive my sight! I believe that thou canst give it; give it to me now!" Ah, perhaps while I speak these words, the flash of the divine light is coming into some dark heart! Salvation does not take hours; it is in one single instant that we pass from death unto life. The moment that we believe in Jesus, we are saved. The moment that we look to him hanging on the cross, our iniquity is pardoned. God grant us that blessed look of faith to-night, each one, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

It may help some to look to Christ if we sing a verse of that well-known hymn,—

> "There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
> There is life at this moment for thee;
> Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
> Unto him who was nail'd to the tree.'

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH VI.; MATTHEW XIII. 10–17; AND LUKE XVIII. 35–43.

Isaiah vi. Verses 1—4. *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the* LORD *sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the* LORD *of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

Isaiah was awe-stricken by this vision of the glory of the Lord. It was a sight such as few eyes have ever seen. Isaiah was never actually in the holy place, for he was no priest, and therefore he could not stand there; but it was in vision that he saw all this glory, and it was a vision that must have remained upon his memory through the rest of his life. The holiness and the glory of God struck him at once.

5. *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the* LORD *of hosts.*

There was, indeed, enough to make him say, "Woe is me!" A sinful preacher, an imperfect preacher, among a sinful and imperfect people, he felt as if the society in which he moved was the reverse of the society in which God dwells. Pure seraphim cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts;" but as for us, our very talk is unholy: "a people of unclean lips."

6, 7. *Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.*

The live coal from off the altar does not represent the holy flame which burns in the prophet's heart; but it represents purgation, cleansing, participation in the sacrifice, and the putting away of sin. With a blister on his lip, Isaiah stood silent before God.

8. *Also I heard the voice of the* LORD, *saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?*

Here we have the Divine Trinity in Unity. "Whom shall *I* send?" There is Unity. "Who will go for *us?*" There is the Trinity. God is seeking a messenger to deliver his message to men.

8. *Then said I,—*

Stammering it out with the blistered lip,—

8. *Here am I; send me.*

Isaiah did not know the errand; perhaps, if he had known it, he would not have been quite so ready to go; who can tell? But God's servants are ready for anything, ready for everything, when once the living coal hath touched their lip. I thank God that I was never called to such a work as Isaiah had to undertake.

9, 10. *And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.*

That was no gospel ministry; it was a ministry of condemnation. The house of Israel had rejected the prophets, and had rejected God; and in the fulness of time would reject God's own dear Son. When Isaiah in vision

looked forward to all this, he was sent not to soften, but to harden; his word was to be a savour of death unto death, and not of life unto life.

11, 12. *Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the* LORD *have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.*

This was a heavy task for the prophet; he had no tidings of God's relenting, no tokens of divine mercy.

13. *But yet—*"

You never get this deep bass note of divine justice without having a "but yet" to accompany it.

13. *In it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.*

When the oak sheds all its leaves, it is not dead; there is living sap that will again cause the tree to be verdant. Though the nation was to be brought very low, there was still to be left a remnant according to the election of grace. Sin never reaches such a point in God's people but what grace triumphs. Still, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

This is a terrible chapter; it shows the sovereignty of God in a lurid light, and reveals how, when sin comes to a certain point, the Lord gives men up, and leaves them to the blindness of their heart, so that even the means of grace, the prophetic message, becomes a means of condemnation to them.

Now we are going to read in one of the many places in the New Testament in which this passage is quoted.

Matthew xiii. Verses 10—12. *And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

You can understand this truth if you go into certain museums. I will suppose that you know nothing whatever of comparative anatomy, and you go into the museum of comparative anatomy at Paris. If you understand a little of the science, you will learn a great deal more: "for whosoever hath, to him shall be given." If you do not know anything about the subject, you will say, "Well, this is the most uninteresting exhibition I ever saw," and you will come out with the feeling that you do not know anything. What you did know will have vanished in the sight of all that mass of bones arranged in those extraordinary shapes. You will only feel your own lack of knowledge in that department; you will show your ignorance, and nothing else. So it is in the things of God. If you understand the fundamental principles of true godliness, you will soon understand more; but if you do not comprehend as much as that, even the reading of the Scriptures will be but slightly instructive to you.

13—15. *Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*

Now the Saviour turned to his disciples, and spoke specially to them.

16. *But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.*

It is no use having eyes that do not see, or ears that do not hear; and yet I fear that there are many eyes of that kind, and many ears of that sort, in this congregation to-night.

17. *For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them: and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

Now let us read one other passage, to show how the Lord heals the blind, and makes them see.

Luke xviii. Verses 35, 36. *And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.*

If he could not see, he could hear, and he could speak. Use all the ability that you have, and God will give you more.

37—39. *And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace:*

They told him that he was spoiling the Preacher's sermon. They had lost his last sentence; they could not catch the Saviour's meaning, so they cried out to the blind man, "Hold your tongue, sir."

39, 40. *But he cried so much the more, Thou son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stood,—*

I can see him stop. He had been walking on before, and talking as he went; but prayer can cause the Saviour to be spell-bound. Here Jesus stood,—

40, 41. *And commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?*

Our Lord likes us to know what it is that we want. He would have us feel our need, that we may have a distinct perception of the blessing when it comes, and know just what it is.

41. *And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.*

He wanted nothing else; but oh, how badly he wanted that boon!

42. *And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight:*

Notice the echo. The blind man said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus said, "Receive thy sight." With a little turn in the expression, Christ's answer is the echo of our prayer.

42. *Thy faith hath saved thee.*

No, surely it was Christ who saved him. Yes, but Christ delights to put his crown on faith's head, for faith always puts the crown back on Christ's head: "Thy faith hath saved thee."

43. *And immediately he received his sight, and followed him,*

What should we do when our eyes are opened by Christ but follow him? The moment that we can see him, we should begin to follow him.

43. *Glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.*

May we have cause to praise the Lord to-night for many blind eyes opened!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—607, 474, 589, 538.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

NO FIXITY WITHOUT FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 23RD, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, April 11th, 1889.

"If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."—Isaiah vii. 9.

As I told you in the reading, Isaiah had a very heavy commission from God. He was to go and speak to people who would not hear him, and to be to them a messenger rather of death than of life. Though the message itself would be full of life, yet they would refuse it, and so bring upon themselves a tenfold death. As a sort of experiment in his work, he was called upon first to go and speak to king Ahaz, that wicked king. He knew in his own soul that what he had to say would be rejected; but, nevertheless, at the command of God, he went to speak to the king. He was told where he would meet him. God knows where to send his faithful servants. He has arranged every circumstance about the true preacher; what he shall say, and where he shall say it; and every congregation is a picked congregation for God's sent servants. He knows who comes and who is away; he knows how to adapt the message with great speciality to the individual case of each person who is within sound of the preacher's voice; and he knows how to adapt even the voice itself to the ear of every hearer. We know all this, for we have had abundant evidence of it again and again.

The tidings which Isaiah took to Ahaz were very pleasant ones. He was not to be afraid of the king of Israel and the king of Syria. These men were determined to destroy him and his people; but they were only like smoking firebrands, almost extinct; their power would soon come to an end; and therefore the prophet told the king not to be distressed, but to be quiet, and to wait patiently till he saw what God would do. Then he challenged the faith of Ahaz, and warned him that, if he did not believe, neither would he be established. Isaiah anticipated what was all too true, that Ahaz would not trust, that he would prefer to look to outward means, and send for the king

of Assyria, and lean upon an arm of flesh rather than put his trust in God. He might have waited, surely, and not have indulged his fears until there was reason for them; but no, he must be all in a fright and a fume notwithstanding that God had said to him, by his servant, "Fear not, neither be fainthearted."

Well now, these words of Isaiah to Ahaz furnish us with a warning and an encouragement. God seems to speak out of this blessed Book to you and to me to-night; certainly, he speaks to me; I hope to you also: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

I. Our first head shall be, GOD DESERVES TO BE BELIEVED. We cannot say this of everybody. Many men deserve to be believed; their character is such that we are bound to trust them. Some men, on the other hand, ought not to be believed; their character is such that we should be foolish to confide in them. But I say, to-night, of him who created the heavens and the earth, the God of this Word of God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he claims to be believed, and he deserves to be believed.

For, first, *he is God; and being God, he cannot lie.* The conception of a lying God may be possible to a heathen; but I trust that to you it is quite out of the question. The very idea of "God" to us means perfect truthfulness, indisputable veracity; God who, from the very necessity of his nature, cannot lie. He can do anything that is right; but he cannot do a wrong thing. He cannot say an untruthful thing. He cannot, either in word, or deed, or thought, be guilty of falsehood: he is God, and he cannot lie. To impute a lie to God, is blasphemy; I will use no softer word. You have brought dishonour upon the sacred name when you have in any way connected the name of Jehovah with a lie. "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?" But oh, beloved, do not treat the Lord as if he were a liar! Remember that, when you doubt his promise,—since you know he can fulfil it if he will, for he is omnipotent,—when you doubt his promise, you are casting a suspicion upon the veracity of the Eternal God. Do you mean to do that? Have you never read that word of the beloved and loving disciple, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son"? Did you really mean to make God a liar? Were you guilty of such infamy as that? Well, I will say no more upon that point; but he deserves to be believed because he is God. It is essential to every true idea of God to believe that God must be true.

He deserves to be believed because *his Word always has been true.* Any person, who is a student of prophecy, knows how literally, even in small things, the prophecies of God have been fulfilled. There was a little book, which was published some time ago by Mr. Urquhart, of Weston-super-Mare, upon fulfilled prophecy. I gave a copy to a brother, the other day, and on writing to me, he said that he had found it much more interesting than any story or novel he had ever read in his life, and vastly more astounding than any romance; for every jot and tittle, to the dots of the i's, and the crosses of the t's, in the prophecies of God's servants, had been recorded in history. In the ruins of Tyre, and Sidon, and Babylon, and the like, we have in every stone a witness of the faithfulness of God to his Word.

Nor is it merely in history that the Lord has been proved to be true. You and I,—I hope I may say that, but I do speak for many here,—have proved the faithfulness of God. He has thrown us into different trials. We have had opportunities for testing the promises, which we could not have tested if we had not been tried. Just as you are unable to see the stars by day, but if you go down a well, you can see them directly at any time of day or night; so, dear friends, God puts us down these deep wells of trial, and then we see his starry promises shining brightly. I would rather take the promise of God than the promise of the Bank of England. The Bank of England might fail,—a terrible disaster certainly, and highly improbable,—but the Word of God cannot fail, for the Lord has greater resources than the whole nation has, or all the nations of the earth put together. The inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers in God's sight. He taketh up such isles as we dwell in as very little things. Oh, friends, the Lord may well have all our confidence, for when we confide in him to our utmost, we have leaned with very little pressure upon the veracity of God! The bull that bore the gnat upon his forehead smiled when the gnat hoped that his weight was not too much for him; but for God to bear us up, is as nothing to him. We may come to him with what we call our great wants, and he will smilingly say, "A crumb from my table will suffice for a million such as you." The things that are but trifles with the Most High, would be enough for all the inhabitants of the world, if they would come to him; therefore let us trust him, as I sometimes say, "Up to the hilt." Let us go in for glorious trusting of our God. When a man does swim, it is a good thing to have deep water. You do not want then to calculate whether it is a mile deep or twenty miles; if you are swimming, why, you are swimming! When you come to trust in the Infinite God, let him be infinite in your thoughts as far as the finite can accept infinity. Trust him without limit or bound, without suspicion or mistrust.

For, further, as he must be true, being God, and as he has been true, being God, so *he has no motive for being untrue.* Why does God ever speak to us at all? Why does the Infinite ever stoop out of his boundless glory, to make himself known to creatures that, before him, are much more insignificant than an emmet on the ant-hill can be to a man? You have never strained yourselves, I am sure, to reveal yourselves to a worm; and yet God has put forth all his sacred ingenuity to manifest himself to man who, compared with his Maker, is but the insect of a minute. Why should he speak to us, think you? To deceive us? It seems to me to be the height of absurdity to suppose that, if Jehovah breaks the eternal silences, it is to mislead a poor, miserable creature like man. Oh, no! The love that makes him speak cannot be questioned, and the truth which he speaks must not be doubted. If God reveals himself to men at all, men may, like little children with a father, feel themselves quite sure that they may most safely trust every word of the revelation. Men talk of "the mistakes of Scripture." I thank God that I have never met with any. Mistakes of translation there may be, for translators are men; but mistakes of the original Word there never can be, for the God who spoke it is infallible, and so is every Word he speaks, and in that confidence we

find delightful rest. There can be no motive for God to give us a Book that is partly true and partly false, about which we are to be the judges, accepting this portion and discarding the other. That would make us worse off, and fill us yet more with self-conceit than we should have been if we had been left without the Book at all. This can never be the case; therefore let us believe that, in God's motive for speaking to us, which must be condescending love, there is a guarantee that he speaks the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

I feel almost ashamed to be talking like this about him who is so surely true, and whom you and I have tried and proved these many years. It seems so idle to have to prove what nobody ought to doubt. For, once more, remember that *the honour of God is involved in his veracity*. If you say that God is not almighty, we may pray God to forgive your mistake; but if you say that he is not truthful, there is a spitefulness, a malice about your assertion which is a grievous wrong to his holy character. God untrue? Oh, sir, I beseech you, do not think so for a moment; for this is a high crime and misdemeanour against the majesty of the eternal throne! God will sooner cease to be than break his promise or forget his plighted Word. He is very jealous for his own glory. He calls himself, in the ten commandments, a jealous God; and so he is. He will never permit the glory of his infinite majesty to be tainted by the suspicion of a falsehood. Therefore, let not any child of his ever doubt him; and, as I fear we have done so, let us tremble before him, and repent that we should ever have had the audacity even to tolerate within a mile of our thoughts anything like a suspicion of our God. His honour is compromised if he breaks his covenant; but this he cannot do, as Paul writes to the Hebrews, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." The blood of the only-begotten Son of God has sealed the covenant; and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than any part of that covenant shall fall to the ground.

Only this one thing I add. Suppose even for a moment,—a supposition we will not even make,—that we could not trust in the truthfulness of God, *what would be left for us to trust to?* When rocks move, what stands firm? If God himself can change, or be not true, come night, and swallow me up in thy blackness; come chaos, and devour me! Oh, for annihilation, that we might cease to be, if God has ceased to be true! Then would the harbours be turned to whirlpools. Then would the rocks be turned into clouds. Would there be anything left? Would not everything disappear, like the foam of the sea, if God could be proved not to be true? Thank God, we do not live in such a chaos as that! We know that he is true; and with Paul we cry, "Let God be true, but every man a liar." Let everything else be swept away like chaff before the wind; but the eternal God and his Word will stand unmoved for ever and ever.

That is my first point: God deserves to be believed.

II. But, secondly, SOME ARE NOT WILLING TO BELIEVE GOD. That is clear by the fear expressed in the text: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

"If ye will not believe." Believing is a matter of the will. A man does not believe without being willing to believe. God's grace works faith, not upon us, but in us. God works in us to will and to do; and in the willing he leads us up to believing. We voluntarily believe; and certainly men voluntarily disbelieve; and some of them, with strong perversity of will, would not believe even though one rose from the dead. Why is this, this strange unwillingness of some men, nay, in a sense of all men, to believe in God?

They are willing to believe other things. We have numbers of persons about, who are like fish with their mouths open, ready for any bait. It does not matter how absurd may be the dream of a man, if he will persistently enough stand up in the street, and publish his dream, or will print it, he will be certain to find a number of fools who will believe what he says. In this country, although we think ourselves so very wise, Carlyle was not far out when he spoke of our population as consisting of so many millions, "mostly fools." At any rate, there is a considerable sprinkling of them about. See how readily men believe what they read in the paper, though, probably, there is not a fragment of truth in it; that is all the better for the paper, because the lie can be contradicted on the morrow, and that will make another column or two, and so fill up at a time when there is a dearth of news. But there is great credulity among men in general. Do you think that anybody could sell patent medicines if everybody would be wise? No; but everybody is not wise. We are willing to believe what a man tells us if he will only tell it to us bravely enough, with a sufficient quantity of brass; but when it comes to believing God's Word, many manifest a strange incapacity to believe. The box is shut, and you cannot find the key; but bring a lie of man, and the box opens of its own accord. There is a sort of "Open sesame" then. Alas, often the falsehood of men is received, and the truth of God is rejected!

Another thing is significant, that *men cling tenaciously to faith in themselves.* They do believe, they will believe, that they can work their way to heaven. You talk to them about their sin. Well, they cannot deny it, they so extenuate it as to make it appear to be rather their misfortune than their fault. It is, with them, a calamity to be sinners, rather than a grave offence. So they make it out to be; and, in the future, those poor creatures are going to manage themselves! The wine-cup, it is true, has tempted them; and they have fallen many times; but now, they know better; they will never be affected by drink again. The lust of the flesh, which has led them captive to many a Delilah—oh, yes, they have "sown their wild oats," they will never go into that form of evil again; and so on, and so on. The creature that has done nothing right, but everything that is wrong, still believes in himself. He goes to church, and calls himself a "miserable sinner", and yet continues to be a happy believer in his capacity to rule himself. "We have done the things we ought not to have done, and have left undone the things we ought to have done; and there is no

health in us." Yes, we said that on our knees; but when we get on our legs again, we are going to do the things we ought to do, and to leave undone the things which should be left undone, and we feel as healthy, from the crown of our head to the sole of our feet, as if we never had a disease about us in our lives. Now, that is a strange thing, that man can believe in himself, and yet cannot believe in God. This is the madness of our nature, that man thinks that he can do everything when he can do nothing.

Then, observe how, instead of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life, *some prefer an emotional religion.* I am astounded at some people, how readily they are excited, how easily they are "saved"; at least, they say they are saved. Do they believe the promises, and hang upon the Word of God? No; but they "feel" so much. These same feelings, that seem to lift you up to heaven, will thrust you down to the depths of Hades. Yet these people prefer mere natural emotions, an inward feeling, to this which is the infinitely sounder way, to believe in God, and in Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Next, *some stubbornly suffer under unbelief.* They have been pining for rest for years; and they have not attained it yet. Still, they will not believe in Christ. Oh, what would they not give if they could but have a night's calm rest, and could by day go to business without distress of mind! Yet they will not give themselves up to Christ to be saved, simply trusting him to save them. They have brought themselves near to the door of suicide, and wished they had never been born; yet they will not take the healing medicine that lies close by their hand. They will do anything sooner than trust in God.

I notice, too, that *such people demand this and that of God, beyond what he has revealed.* God has spoken; but that is not enough for them. God must do something else for them; they must dream some peculiar dream; they must see some strange vision; they must fancy that they hear a voice in the air. Pshaw! put the whole of that nonsense away. Believe what God has said, and thou art on sure ground. Come to this "more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." Believe this, and thy peace shall be like a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. But no; they will not. God must do this or that to oblige them, or else they will not believe him. Thou makest him a liar if he will not pamper thy whims; but he will do nothing of the sort.

I might, with profit, dwell on that point, but time flies too rapidly for me to say more upon it.

III. Notice, in the third place, that FAITH IS NOT A THING TO BE DESPISED.

Have you never heard people say, "Oh, they preach up faith, you know"? "Well, what is faith?" "Well, it is just believing so-and-so." Listen, sirs, and then speak like that no more. Faith is a most wonderful thing, for *it is a fair index of the heart.* If thou wilt not believe in God, I see that in thy heart thou hatest God; but if thou wilt believe him, thou lovest him. We trust a man whom we love. I think that there is little trust in men towards whom we have no esteem and affection. If thou believest God, thy heart is right with him. If thou wilt not believe him, do what thou mayest, thou art out

of order with thy God, I am sure of that. A child who does not believe his father's word is no loving and obedient child, we know.

Faith in God is, next, *a sure proof of a change of mind*, for by nature we do not think of God, much less do we trust him; we trust what we can see, and hear, and taste, and feel. When we trust God, it shows that we have undergone a great change of mind, a singular change, of which there can be no surer evidence than that we see him who is invisible, and we live under the influence of his presence, and we really seek to please him whom mortal eye hath never seen.

Does anyone think that faith is a little thing? Why, *it inaugurates purity of life*. The moment that a man believes in Christ Jesus, and trusts him, he ceases from the sin he formerly loved. Sin becomes to him a burden and a plague. If thou believest, thy belief will kill thy sinning, or else thy sinning will kill thy believing. The greatest argument against the Bible is an unholy life; and when a man will give that up, he will convince himself. The Book will convince him when he has put out of the way that darling sin that now stands between him and God. A belief in God, as he reveals himself in Christ, is the inauguration of a life of self-sacrifice and holiness.

Do any still talk of faith as being a little thing? Why, *it is faith that leads to prayer*, and prayer is the very breath of God in man, returning whence it came. If thou believest, thou wilt pray. How canst thou pray if thou dost not believe? Dost thou knock at a door of which thou art persuaded that there is nobody there to hear thee? Thou art not such a fool, I trust; but when thou believest that there is a God, and that God is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, thou wilt begin to seek him, and thou wilt never leave off seeking him as long as thou art in the land of the living.

Faith little? Why, *it is faith that glorifies God*. All the works that we can ever do, be they what they may, can never bring such glory to God as a single act of trust. I venture to say that the highest adoration is not that of cherubim and seraphim before the blazing throne; but that of a poor sinner conscious of guilt, who, nevertheless, believes in God as he reveals himself in Christ, putting away sin by the great sacrifice. If thou canst to-night believe, thou biggest sinner out of hell, that God can pardon thee, thou hast done him honour. And if thou, poor, troubled Christian, in the very vortex of thy grief, canst still believe that God is faithful, and that he will bear thee through, thou hast glorified his blessed name more than angels can. This is practical music that consists not in sound, but in the inner sense of the heart. It is true melody to God. Faith is not the trifle that some think it to be. This holy trust in God is the heart and soul of all true experimental godliness.

IV. So I have come to my last point, grieving that I have had to slur so much where I should have liked to speak at length: THOSE WHO REFUSE TO EXERCISE FAITH WILL MISS MANY GREAT PRIVILEGES. I might mention many, but the text gives us the one which I will dwell upon: "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established."

It means, first, that those who believe not will miss *establishment in comfort*. If you believe not in God, your heart shall be moved like the trees of the wood by the wind; you shall be tossed to and fro, like the

waves that dash on the rocks; you shall be driven along like a rolling thing that is twisted about by the whirlwind. But if you will believe in God, and in his dear Son who reveals him, then you shall come to an anchorage, and there you shall outride every storm. Fear shall depart, and your soul shall be at rest. Oh, you do not know the profound calm that overspreads the spirit when it has done with itself, and just commits itself to God! You never can know this, if you will not believe.

In the next place, if ye will not believe, ye shall never enjoy *establishment in judgment*. There are many persons who do not know what to believe; they heard one man the other day, and they thought that he spoke very cleverly, and they agreed with him. They heard another the next day, who was rather more clever, and he went the other way, so they went with him. Poor souls, driven to and fro, never knowing what is what! "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established;" you shall be like the moon, that is never two days alike; you shall seem to believe this, and to believe that, and yet really believe nothing. But if you will come, and trust your God, wholly believe every Word that he has spoken, and especially believe the Incarnate Word, the ever-blessed Son of God, who gave himself for the guilty, then you shall begin to know something. You shall put things in their right places, and, knowing the truth, you shall know more of it, and you shall get the assurance of faith, from which you shall never be shaken, as the Holy Ghost shall bear witness to the truth within your soul.

Next, we want an *establishment in conduct*. Look at certain men who once professed to be converted. They were down at a revival meeting the other day, and they went to the penitent form; and then, a day or two after, they went to quite another form. They made a confession of faith, and joined the church. Ah, me! the church will be well rid of them, if their conduct is such as it has been lately. But why is it that their conduct is not always as it should be? How is it that many men are this and that and twenty things? How is it that there is inconsistent behaviour? My text supplies the answer, "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." But a genuine faith in God, a solid faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, a true realization of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, will keep you from stumbling, and you shall be preserved faultless until the coming of your Lord.

So it is, also, with *establishment in hope*. We know some who are, at times, all bright of eye, and cheerful with hope, and they look into the eternal world with great delight. They half wish that they could die at once, and be where Jesus is; but after a very short time their castle in the air melts away; they have no joy, no hope, no peace. No; "If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." If ye hope without believing, your hope is an anchor that has not gripped anything. If you expect without a proper ground of expectation; or if the ground be not what God has said, then you may expect what you like, but as your expectation is not from him, it will certainly be disappointed. Oh, that you would make the Word of God the top and bottom of everything in your life! Oh, that you would take it

as the Alpha and Omega of your knowledge of things divine! Then would ye be established, for there would be something to ground your hope upon, which even Satan could not destroy.

And, lastly, we want to be *established in spiritual vigour and strength.* You do not want to be always babes in Christ; you want to be fathers. You desire to be useful; you want to be bringing others to Christ. Perhaps you look at some with envy. You say, "Such-and-such a person is quite a mother in Israel; such-and-such a man is a standard-bearer for Christ; but I am a poor, puny thing, of no use to the Lord." If thou wouldst grow, thou must believe thy God. He that gets close to God, and leans wholly upon God, shall have divine strength imparted to him. We have never believed God, any one of us, as we ought to have believed him. Some of us have believed him, as we thought, without reserve at times. Have we not gone to him? —we will not tell the story now—have we not gone to him in abject need, and cast ourselves upon him, and found all supplies even exceeding abundantly above what we asked for or even thought? Then have we found that our God has been to us like the illimitable waters of the great sea, and we have cried to others, "Bring your great vessels, and fill them from this ocean." I am told that, in the olden times, on Christmas Day, it was the custom in country villages for the squire always to fill with good things whatever vessels the poor people brought up to the hall, that they might have a Christmas dinner. It was strange how big the basins grew year after year. Whenever the man came round with the crockery cart, every good housewife would look all over his stock to see if there was not a still larger basin. It was a rule that the squire's servants should always fill the bowl, whatever size it was, and thus the bowls grew bigger and bigger. Oh, my dear friends, God will fill your bowl, however large it is! Get as big a bowl as you can; and when you bring it, if ever there comes a whisper in your ear, "Now you have presumed upon God's benevolence, you have brought too big a bowl," smile at yourself, and say, "This is as nothing to his overflowing fulness." If I said, "O poor sea, poor sea, now thou wilt be drained dry, for they bring such big bowls to be filled with thy waters;" the sea, tossing its mighty billows far and wide, would laugh at my folly. Come, then, and bring your largest conceptions of God, and multiply them ten thousandfold, and believe in him as this Book would make you believe in him. Open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it. He bids you even to command him. He says, "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." That is a wonderful expression; rise to the sublimity of faith, and be daring with your God.

And ye guilty ones, look up, believing that he is greater in mercy than you are in sin, and more able to forgive than you are to transgress; and you shall find it so; but "if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established." Let us all go home, believing in Christ Jesus, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH VII. 1—16, AND 2 CHRONICLES XXVIII. 1—16.

Isaiah vii. Verses 1, 2. *And it came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it. And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.*

They were tossed to and fro, bent, thrown down, as the trees of a forest in a tornado. They had already felt the power of these two confederate kings, and they were terribly afraid. David himself would have had confidence in God; but "the house of David" had gone far astray. Ahaz had cast off the fear of God, and he had therefore great fear of men.

3. *Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son,*

Shear-jashub was but a child; and why Isaiah was to take his son with him does not appear, except that his name signifies, "The remnant shall return," and it was part of the prophet's message that the remnant, the people who had been carried away captive, should return.

3. *At the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field;*

God knows the exact spot where his servants shall meet with the men to whom he sends them. There is a corner where the fuller's field just juts upon the upper pool; there Isaiah will meet king Ahaz, and there he is to speak to him. Is there any spot just by the "Elephant and Castle" where God means to meet with some soul to-night? I pray that it may be so.

4. *And say unto him,*

The prophet is told the word he is to speak as well as the place where he is to deliver the message. Isaiah knew that he was soon to go and deal with men of hard heart and deaf ear. The other day we read the sixth chapter of this prophecy; and we noted the hard task that Isaiah had to perform. Now he is beginning his work with the man whom the Bible calls, "That king Ahaz," as if it could not say anything bad enough of him, but had merely to mention his name, and everybody would know who was meant.

4. *Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah.*

Their kingdoms were dying out. They were like burnt-out firebrands; they made a little smoke, but within a very short time there would be nothing left of them, and Ahaz need not be afraid of them.

5—9. *Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people. And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son.*

God did not intend it to grow any bigger. These two little kingdoms of Syria and Ephraim were to keep as they were until they were destroyed.

9—12. *If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established. Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God;*

ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

He put his refusal very prettily, as men often do when they want to say an evil thing. He refused to accept a sign from the Lord, under the idle pretence that it would be tempting God. We never tempt God when we do what he bids us. There is no presumption in obedience. It was an idle compliment, to conceal the impudence of his heart. The Lord invited him to acknowledge Jehovah as his God: "Ask thee a sign of Jehovah thy God." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt Jehovah." He did not say, "Jehovah, my God"; and his silence meant dissent.

13. *And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David;*

Observe, the prophet does not say, "Hear now, O Ahaz!" as if God would not deal with Ahaz on his own account, but only because he was of the "house of David." The Lord remembered his covenant with David. God sometimes blesses men for the sake of their fathers. He might not hear a word that they had to say; but he remembers their fathers, and the amity and comity which there was between himself and their fathers.

13, 14. *Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,*

A wonderful sign this!

14, 15. *And shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.*

Whereupon a wise commentator says that, before children are able to learn, their parents should look upon the very feeding of them as a means of making them to know the difference between good and evil.

16. *For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.*

This was the sign-manual. Judah could not be destroyed, for our Lord was to spring out of Judah; and this was the sign that Judah must stand, because Immanuel must be born of that nation, and the time for this great event was fixed by the Lord. Until a child is some few years of age, he does not distinguish between good and evil; but in a shorter time than it would take a child to come to years of responsibility, God meant to cut off both those kings, and he did so. This was a very wonderful prophecy, and ought to have filled Ahaz with great delight, and with confidence in God; but it did nothing of the kind.

Now we are going to read more of the story of this king Ahaz.

2 Chronicles xxviii. Verses 1—3. *Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the* LORD, *like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the* LORD *had cast out before the children of Israel.*

God had driven out the Canaanites because of these abominations; therefore, for his own people to practise them, was peculiarly provoking to him.

4. *He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.*

He could not do enough of it; so many trees, so many altars. There are some men who use every opportuity for sin, with a diligence which should bring the blush into the face of Christians, who are not as diligent in obeying as these men are in sinning.

5. *Wherefore the* LORD *his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.*

It did not look as if the captives would ever return; yet the prophet's son was named Shear-jashub, "The remnant shall return." Ahaz might have said to Isaiah, "Your child's name is a lie." We shall see.

6—11. *For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the* LORD *God of their fathers. And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king. And the children of Israël carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria. But a prophet of the* LORD *was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the* LORD *God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven. And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the* LORD *your God? Now, hear me, therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the* LORD *is upon you.*

It was very wonderful that these wild fellows should listen to this prophet with all those captives round about them. It was a brave act on the part of the prophet Oded to go out, and utter his protest.

12—15. *Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war, and said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the* LORD *already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.*

What a wonderful thing that was! Ahaz ought to have said to Isaiah, "Your child's name is right, after all; for the remnant has returned." Did it not seem as if Ahaz must now trust God? But notice what the next verse says.

16. *At that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.*

When men are determined to be unbelievers and disobedient, they will send anywhere for help but to the Lord. Israel and Syria were very little kingdoms; but Assyria was a great empire, the mighty nation of the period. Yet no help came to Ahaz from that quarter, for we read in the twentieth verse, "And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not." The twenty-first verse tells us that Ahaz bribed the king of Assyria; "but he helped him not." That is always the dirge at the end of all efforts to secure human instead of divine aid.

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SERVITUDE OR SERVICE—WHICH?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, APRIL 30TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 14th, 1889.

"Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."—2 Chronicles xii. 8.

THE people of God had left their God, and he had left them, so that Shishak, the king of Egypt, came against them; and though the Lord had respect to their humble prayer, and would not suffer Shishak to destroy Jerusalem, yet he brought them into subjection to the Egyptian king. Our text tells us the reason for this servitude: "They shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

Beloved friends, the children of Israel were bound to the service of God. Jehovah had chosen them out of all the nations of the world to be his people. He had committed the holy oracles to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; they were from before the foundation of the world set apart in the eternal purpose to be the Lord's. That highly honourable and gracious choice ought to have bound them to his service. In addition to this, they were called out by his own voice. Their father Abraham was fetched out from Ur of the Chaldees, where he served other gods; and he was led to know Jehovah, and to follow him. He walked with God, and God was very familiar with him, so that he spoke with him as a man speaketh with his friend. All along the ages, God called his people out from the world; especially did he call them out of Egypt, delivering them out of the house of bondage with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. He led them through the wilderness, and fed them with manna, and instructed them; and in this way he separated them to be his own peculiar portion beyond all the sons of men. By their calling, then, as well as by their election, they were bound to keep close to the one living and true God.

And above this, as if to make them doubly his own, he entered into a covenant with them. It was first made with Abraham; then

it was renewed with Isaac and with Jacob. The covenant was still further ratified in the wilderness, where the Lord promised that, when they came into Canaan, he would be their God, and he would bless them; but he stipulated that they must obey his voice, and cling to him, and have him only to be their God, his Word and his Law to be the rule and guide of their life. This covenant God always kept, but the people broke it very soon, so that Moses shattered the tables of stone, a fit symbol of the way in which Israel broke the Law of God.

Is it not very sad to think that the great God, who made the heavens and the earth, should have but one nation out of all the inhabitants of the world, and these his by choice, by calling, and by covenant, and yet that they should continually grow weary of him? Other peoples did not change their gods. It was a rare thing for a nation to cast away its idols in those days; but Israel, which alone had the true God, while the rest had gods that were only idols, quitted the living and true God to set up in his place the gods of the heathen, which could do them no good.

Now, this phenomenon of human nature, this going after idols, and leaving the true God, is constantly being renewed. We have the same thing even in the Church of God, which never seems to be satisfied with chaste love for Christ, but continually goes after one strange lover and another. Thus Christ's pure truth is left for some brilliant error, and his simple worship is deserted for some invention of man. Even when God spoke by his servant Shemaiah the prophet, the men of Judah were itching to be after their idols, and panting to get away from God; and the Lord said, "Inasmuch as they have forsaken me, I have left them in the hand of Shishak, and they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."

I. In considering these words to-night, I shall say, first, that THERE ARE SOME WHO HAVE ALREADY CHOSEN THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS OF THE COUNTRIES.

We have many round about us who have deliberately chosen not to serve God, but to serve other masters. O beloved, if you have chosen to serve God, it is because God has chosen you! If I am speaking to-night to any of you whose one object in life is God's glory, who can truly say that you live as in the fear of God, and before him, endeavouring to please him, that is evidence of a work of grace within your heart. You are very grateful that such a work of grace has been wrought upon you; but how many there are of our fellow-men who have chosen some other god and some other way of living!

Some choose to be *the slaves of open sin.* Hardly, I think, would they choose such slavery if they really knew all that it included; but they have chosen it practically. How many there are who are the devotees of drunkenness! Ah, me! what can they see in Bacchus that they should worship him? Others are the slaves of licentiousness. I need not mention the forms of uncleanness in which so many wallow in this foul city of ours, where the temptation to sin is in every street. The forms of evil are many; I need not mention them, for, if I did, I might omit some one; and then, perhaps, the person who is under its

influence might fancy that I did not think it to be a sin. But if you choose to live for sinful pleasure, let me tell you that you have entered upon a servitude compared with which the service of God is light and pleasant indeed. Whatever the strictest form of religion may require of you, it will never demand of you so much as vicious pleasure will do. I could stand here, and tell of cases that have come under my own notice, of men and women who, in pursuit of sin, have brought themselves to beggary. Have I not seen the son of honest and godly parents clothed in rags, and covered with vermin, so that, when I spoke to him, I could not, with the utmost sympathy, dare to come within an arm's length of him? Have I not seen the same sort of person, through drunkenness, full of disease, bloated and sure soon to die? And when other sins have been added to these, have we not sometimes been in a hospital where, talking with a wretched man upon his bed, who brought upon himself the whole of his disease, we could not but feel that a martyr, when he died at the stake, did not endure for God such awful agony as this poor fool endured in the pursuit of his lusts? I tell you, and I defy the world to doubt the statement, that the service of sin is the most horrible of slaveries; and that, when men give themselves to it, and their passions become dominant, the worse serfdom that there ever was upon the face of the earth is freedom compared with the bondage of a man's own passions. If you want to know the truth about this matter, I would not advise you to learn it by experience; but I would recommend you to go to some one who has run his evil course, and has come to the end of it, and ask him if it be not true that the wages of sin is death. Then go to the dying Christian, like one of our brethren who has passed away this week, a man who spent his Sabbaths preaching the Word, and earned his bread in the week-days. When he came to die, with an internal cancer, those who saw him said that nobody could be happier, nobody could be more full of triumph than he in the prospect of soon being with his Saviour. Oh, let me serve God! Let me not serve my lusts! Young men, young women, God help you, by his grace, to make that wise and happy choice at once!

There are many persons who are not the worshippers of vice, but they are *the votaries of money-making*. They are the slaves of the thirst for wealth. This is a very common evil; and I invite you to look upon those who have made gain the one object of life. Some have carried it out very resolutely. The miser lives poor that he may die rich. He scrapes money together that his heir may fling it away again. I do think that his god is a very poor one, and that the service he renders to his god is a very wretched business; for when he succeeds in gathering money, then there is the care of keeping it, and with some it is a very great care indeed. I will not mention the name of one of the richest men of this period; but I believe it is true that, when one congratulated him upon his great wealth, he said, "Oh, do not talk in that way! Here is a fellow who has just written to me, saying that I must give him £200, or else he will blow my brains out; and, wherever I am, I am always being persecuted for money. Money brings no happiness to people who possess it." He is one who ought to know, for he has more than most men. You will find that persons who rise

in what are called the ranks of society, do not have more happiness; they only have a heavier load to carry. I find one stick to be a great help to me when I go out walking; but if I had a bundle of twenty sticks, I suppose I should find it quite a load to carry; and those who accumulate so much wealth, often have to confess that the game is not worth the candle; they have only acquired that which they cannot enjoy. A man cannot wear more than one suit of clothes at a time, after all; and let him do what he likes, he cannot eat seven dinners in a day, and he cannot enjoy ten times more than anyone else. While the poor man always has a stomach for his meat, and his only trouble is to get meat for his stomach, this poor rich man can find no appetite to enjoy his dainties. Ah, the votary of money-making is employed in a hard service! I have seen him even when he is getting old, and when he has made sufficient, with his nose still on the grindstone; he must be always at the office, he must be always sticking to his post like the worst-paid clerk in the place; and he is still as penurious as ever. He has buried himself beneath a hill of gold. Live for God, my dear sir; he will give you the things of this life; he will show you how to get as much as shall be truly useful to you; but if you make gold your god, you will serve a hard master.

There are some others who do not try to get much money, but they are *lovers of fashion, lovers of society, admirers of the world.* I will not say much about these ladies and gentlemen; I do not think that I have enough respect for them to speak about their special form of slavery. They must go away from London when "society" goes; they would be ashamed to stop at home when fashionable people go out of town. They must go to such-and-such a place, not because they care to go there, but because it is the fashion. They have to do just this much; and they must not do that much. Poor slaves, I should like to snap every link of their chains! It does seem such a dreadful piece of slavery for men and women that they dare not do what is right, and what they would like to do, but must do what other people do; etiquette binds them hand and foot. Oh, that they had but the will and the strength to break these fetters! The man who dresses for fashion, and lives for fashion, ceases to be a man; I know what they call such creatures, but I will not repeat the term of contempt which is applied to them. The woman who lives only to be fashionable ceases to be a woman. I will say no more about her. This idol of fashion is a hard and silly god, for it requires its devotees to make themselves into fools, if not into something worse.

Then there is another cult that has lately come up, which some have chosen, so that they have become *the devotees of "culture."* How many have forsaken the simple gospel, and turned away from the belief in their Bible which their mother had, and in which their father died, because they want to be considered very thoughtful and clever and superior persons! Now, I have noticed that, whenever a person gives up his belief in the Word of God because it requires that he should believe a good deal, his unbelief requires him to believe a great deal more. If there be any difficulties in the faith of Christ, they are not one-tenth as great as the absurdities in any system of unbelief which seeks to take its place. I do not hesitate to say that the whole doctrine

of evolution, with which many men are fascinated to-day, is ten thousand times more absurd than the most ridiculous travesty of what is taught in the Word of God, and that it requires more faith, and also far greater gullibility than to believe any doctrine which is deduced from Holy Scripture. You will find great demands made upon your faith by Shishak, if you become his servants. He will tax you, and take all you have; whereas, to believe what God has said is, after all, but a reasonable service. The man who goes in for the new ideas in religion, the man of "progress", who is so wise and learned, must confess that he loses that sweet rest of heart that he has seen in Christian people, which was enjoyed by the godly woman described by Cowper,—

> "Who knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
> A truth the brilliant Frenchman never knew."

There is safe anchorage for us here; but there is no anchorage out on the sea of personal infallibility. "Oh!" says one, "I never claimed that." No, my dear sir; but there must be infallibility somewhere, and if you are the judge of the Word of God, you have shifted the infallibility from the Word to yourself, and you are really the claimant of it; in your own heart of hearts, you think so. Where will you ever get rest with such a delusion as that? He who resteth on himself resteth on a very frail foundation indeed. I believe this night that upon which I can pray, that upon which I can live, that upon which I can die. My faith is fixed in the revealed Word of God; and I find that it sustains me in the hour of bitter bodily pain, with which I am too well acquainted; and in the hour of deep depression of spirit, with which I am all too familiar; and in the time of cruel desertion, for I have had some of the best friends fail me; and in the time of slander, for who has had anything worse spoken of him than they have uttered against me? I can fall back upon the eternal verities; they are the hills from which my help cometh, and they never fail me. Can any man say the same of his "culture" and "progress", and of his "advanced thought"? Can he live or die on such stuff as that? Why, he cannot even live on it; for, by his own admission, he cannot write out his creed, because he believes one thing to-day, but he may believe quite another thing to-morrow, and the next day he will in all probability have shifted his ground again. Oh, this Shishak, this new god, lately come up, his service is unspeakably harder than the service of the eternal truth, and there is no wage to be won from it!

I will only refer to one more class of those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms; these are *the seekers of self-righteousness*. This is an old-fashioned and very respectable deity whom many still worship. They are seeking to be saved by their own works, by their charitableness, by their religiousness, by sacraments, by priests, by their own feelings, by something of their own. It is a hard way, in which a man never has any rest or assurance. It is a way in which he runs, because of the crack of the whip behind him,—"This do, and thou shalt live; do not this, and thou shalt perish." How infinitely superior is the way of simply trusting Christ, and then obeying him

out of gratitude; not working for life, but from life; not seeking to serve Christ in order to be saved, but because you are saved, and wish to work out that which God has worked in you, to will and to do of his own good pleasure!

Surveying these different masters, I venture to say, once for all, and then I leave this part of my subject, that those who have chosen the service of the kingdoms have made a very foolish and evil choice, and that those who have chosen the service of God may for ever bless the Lord with all their hearts.

II. Here is our second point. SOME SEEM TO BE PINING TO GIVE UP THE SERVICE OF GOD, AND TO GO TO THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOMS.

It is a strange thing; but this evil is always breaking out even among the people of God. Some want to change out of *sheer love of change*. That you should want to change ministers, I do not at all wonder at; my voice must have become very monotonous to some of you; but that you should want to change gospels, that does distress me. That there should be any man who grows weary of the everlasting chimes of the glorious notes of free grace and dying love, does appal me. No, no; let me hear the voice of God through eternity, for it has a perpetual freshness and novelty about it. I can bear with the monotony of the preacher, if the monotone be still full of Jesus and his love. But there are some people who cannot be constant to anything. They are like the moon. You could not measure the moon for a suit of clothes with the hope of ever fitting it; and so you cannot tell what these men are or where they are; for they are ever on the change.

Some want to be off to their idols, because of *the outward aspect of the new thing*. It looks grand to them to go in for the "culture" ideas, and it seems a fine thing to live for the world. Men of the world seem so grand as they roll along in their carriages; why should not we be as great as they? Then there is something very tangible about minding the main chance; for, after all, if you do not get the £ s. d., where are you? The world will not think much of you. "Oh!" says one; "I like the thought of this following after Christ; but he is a root out of a dry ground, and his people are generally poor, common sort of folk. I should like to get in amongst the uppermost people." When men begin to run down the people of God, I always find that they are not worth much themselves. When any man is ashamed of a child of God because he is poor, he must be a very poor creature himself; but that is often a reason for turning away from the service of God to the service of the kingdoms.

Sometimes men turn aside because of their *loss of joy in the service of God*. They are not serving the Lord as they used to do; they are doing but little for him. Now, a little religion is a very bitter thing. If you have only a little of it, you will find that there is no sweetness in it. It is like the boys that go to bathe in the river in the early morning. One just dips his foot in the water. "Ugh!" he cries. It shivers him right through; but he who takes a header, and plunges in, glows all over in a moment. I wish that some religious people would just take a header. If they did, they would feel the joy of the Lord

thrill through them, and there would be no fear that they would ever want to leave his service. Beware of a little godliness. To say, "I want just as much religion as will take me into heaven, just as much godliness as will save my bacon," is dishonouring to Christ, and essentially mean. When the joy is gone out of religion, we do not wonder that men want to get away from it.

Then, there are many who are led to want a change from the service of God by *the flagging of others.* They meet with many who say, "Well, really you are not going to keep to that old style of things, are you?" Another says, "I have found something very brilliant and fresh." They listen to these tempting voices, and they think to themselves, "One cannot always go against the stream." If they would really think, they would remember that live fish swim against the stream; it is the dead fish that go floating down with the tide. I like the man who says, "I am not going to take my religion from my companions. If they do not intend to go to heaven, I am sorry for them; but as for myself, I know what I am at. My heart is fixed, almighty God, fixed on thee, believing in thy dear Son, resting in his precious blood! I am resolved, come fair or foul, to keep my face towards the celestial city till I behold the King in his beauty, and reign with him for ever and ever." God give you that fixed and firm resolution! Many cannot do anything contrary to their surroundings; they must do as other people do, poor creatures that they are

There are some who turn aside because religion now has brought them to a point where *it entails some extra self-sacrifice.* I have known some who have said, "Well, I am prepared for many things in the cause of God; but we must draw a line somewhere. One may buy gold too dearly. I could not, for instance, give up my situation. If my employer commanded me to do a wrong thing, I think that I should stretch my conscience a little, and do it. I could not lose my situation." Another says, "Well, I could not enter a protest against such-and-such an error. If I did, I should have all my friends down upon me, and they would call me bigoted and narrow-minded." And that would break your heart, would it? It would be a very soft heart if it would. "Oh, but really, I am not the man to stand out by myself!" Are you not? Remember that text, "The fearful"—that is, the cowardly—"and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." God grant that you may not have that for your portion! Oh, that you may follow Christ at all hazards! Be this your word—

> "Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
> I'll follow where he goes;
> 'Hinder me not,' shall be my cry,
> Though earth and hell oppose."

III. I am going to finish with this point. THERE IS A GREAT CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND ANY OTHER SERVICE.

The service of God is delightful. Remember, young man, if you are about to engage in the service of God, *there is nothing demanded of you that will harm you.* There is no commandment of God which, if you keep it, will injure either your body or your soul. There is nothing

asked of you but what will be for your benefit; nothing that will really be to your loss. If it should seem to involve a present loss, yet it shall be turned to future gain; for God will overrule it for your permanent good.

Next, notice, that *there is nothing denied you, in the service of God, that would be a blessing to you.* The promise is, "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." You shall neither have less pleasure, nor less strength, nor less real honour, if you obey the commands of God. You may seem sometimes to give up what appears to be pleasant to you; but God denies his children nothing that would be really for their advantage. The service of God is, after all, such a service that, if we lived selfishly, we might wish to live as God bids us live. If a man were infinitely wise, and could fashion a life which, upon the whole, would be best for himself, he could not do better than to fashion it according to the commands of God, and the example of Christ; and you cannot say that of any of the servitudes of which I have spoken.

Once more, observe, that *in the service of God strength will always be given according to your day.* When you serve the Lord, if he sends you out upon a tough piece of work, he will give you extra grace; and if he calls you to great suffering, he will give you greater patience. He does not require of you more than he is prepared to give you. He will do for you exceeding abundantly above what you ask or even think. What a service is this in which we are never sent to warfare at our own charges! Shishak, the king of Egypt, and all the Egyptian kings built pyramids and dug canals. You have often wondered how they made them. In the reign of one of them, nearly the third of a million of people were forced to go and dig a canal; and they were not only never paid a penny, but they never had even a piece of bread given to them, nor were they even furnished with tools. The bulk of them had to dig out the canals with their own fingers, and they perished by thousands. That is your Shishak, king of Egypt; that is the devil's service all over. There is no reward given, and no help whatever. You are left to do the best you can; and that best brings you no reward, either in this life or in that which is to come.

Here, again, is a further beauty about the service of God, that *there is no threat made to hang upon it.* You are saved if you are a believer in Christ; that matter is done with; Christ has saved you. You do not go out to work for God with any idea of winning heaven, or of escaping hell by what you can do; you are saved, and you serve the Lord with a higher, purer, grander motive, namely, that of unselfish gratitude, loving him because he first loved you. You serve God after a very different fashion from the servitude of sin. The servitude of a slave is bitter; but the service of a son is sweet, and to that we are called.

And all the while that you are the servant of God, *you have a sweet peace in reflecting upon what you have done.* Did you ever go out for a day, or for an evening, with friends, spending a merry time in gaiety, perhaps not altogether censurable, but still, not entirely commendable? When you have gone upstairs to bed, have you not thought, "Well, somehow, I do not feel quite happy"? When you went to pray, did you not feel as if you had broken your knee; and when

you awoke in the night, and thought over what seemed so very nice at the time, was it not honey in your mouth, but gall in your bowels? Did you ever spend a whole day in the service of God? When you have gone to bed at night, how have you felt? Very tired, perhaps; but oh, so thankful that you could look upon it all without regret! You could chew the cud of that service. There was something in the recollection that soothed you in the night. As George Herbert said, when he helped a poor woman with her load, and men wondered that the parson of the parish should carry a poor woman's basket for her, "The memory of this will make the bells ring in my heart at night," so the service of God makes the bells ring in our hearts.

Lastly, there is above all this *a hope of the eternal reward which is so soon to come.* I spoke, the other day, on board ship with a brother in Christ, and as we talked together, I said, "Well, you know, I may be in heaven in a quarter of an hour. If the ship went down, I do not believe that it would make any difference to me," and he said, "Nor to me." I believe that we were the happiest men on board that steamer. How sweet it is to feel that you are not your own, but that you belong to God! If you really belong to God, he will not lose you. He has never yet lost anything that was truly his. He puts the broad arrow or the bleeding heart on you to show that you belong to the King. The devil himself dare not run away with you. God will call for you in that day when the inventory of the divine possessions shall be read. You shall be known as marked by the King, and you shall be his for ever and ever. Oh, let us try to live so that we can die in the same style as we are living! It is well to be walking in such a way that you can walk right straight on though a grave should be in your way; and walk right straight through it, and out at the other side. Young man, are you going the way that you would like to keep on going for ever and ever? The train is starting; you are taking your seat; which way do you want to go, to the realm of brightness, or the land of eternal darkness? Take your seat in that carriage which will go right through to the better land; and taking your seat, feel, "Now the train may go right on to the terminus; for this purpose did I enter it, that I might go to the end of the journey." Many want to go as far as they can down the dark valley, and then they hope that they will get out at some station or other, and change their track. Be not so unwise; but, to-night, enter the right train. Lay hold on eternal life. Put your trust in Jesus; and may we meet in heaven without having had to know by bitter experience the awful difference between the service of God and the service of the kingdom of darkness!

God bless you, dear friends, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 KINGS XIV. 21—24; AND 2 CHRONICLES XII.

1 Kings xiv. Verse 21. *And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah.*

After great mountains often come low valleys. Solomon was a wise man; Rehoboam was otherwise.

21. *Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the* LORD *did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there.*

Rehoboam ought to have been a good king. Jerusalem was the holy city, the chosen city; God put his own name there. It is a sad thing that this king should try to put away God's name from the chosen city.

21. *And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.*

There was bad blood in him. How often do we find that the good king has a good mother's name mentioned with his own! Bad kings generally come from some stranger, some heathen princess. It was so with Rehoboam.

22. *And Judah did evil in the sight of the* LORD, *and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.*

Their fathers had been great sinners; but, in the days of David, they had not set up false gods. In the days of Solomon, after the temple had been built, they began to go astray. It is a curious thing that a high ritualistic service, even if it be right, is usually attended with a down-coming in spirituality. When the temple service was instituted, it was the beginning of a decline; but in Rehoboam's day that decline became more apparent, the "down-grade" became more visible.

23. *For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.*

They could not have enough of it. When men go wrong, they generally go wrong very greedily; they cannot have too much of evil.

24. *And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the* LORD *cast out before the children of Israel.*

When men once turn aside from the living God to follow inventions of their own, there is no telling where they will go; nothing is too foul, nothing is too filthy for them.

Now read the same story as you find it in 2 Chronicles xii.

Verse 1. *And it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the* LORD, *and all Israel with him.*

They prospered, at first, by adhering to Jehovah. The good people out of the neighbouring land of Israel emigrated to them, strengthening them; but, as soon as they grew strong, they forsook the law of Jehovah.

2. *And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the* LORD,

Shishak did not know that fact, nor did he care about Jehovah. God so ruled in providence that, when his people cast him off, he soon found a rod with which to chasten them. The king of Egypt determined to conquer them. You do not know, my friends, how God will smite you; but if you err from his statutes, he will never be long without a rod. You will bring chastisement on yourself if you depart from the living God. You will have yourself to blame if some dire affliction happens to you.

3. *With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.*

This vast crowd ate up everything. The rule was to quarter on the enemy. They would devour every eatable thing throughout the whole country.

4. *And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.*

When God means to chasten a people, he does not take long to do it; neither can their weakened strength successfully oppose their enemy.

5. *Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.*

The prophet gave them no invitation to repentance; but just an explanation of the sorrow which had come upon them.

6. *Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.*

That was well done. They had not yet become so confirmed in their rebellion as to reject the prophet of God, and to turn in wilful, wanton, resolute disobedience against him.

7. *And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves,*

Though it was not in a spiritual way, yet—

7. *The word of the LORD came to Shemaiah saying, They have humbled themselves: therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak.*

He shall not storm the city; he shall not destroy it.

8. *Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.*

The Lord's people were to know the difference between the service of God and the service of the kings of the countries round about them. It would be a very sharp contrast, and a very bitter one.

9. *So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD,*

The temple was always very rich. Shishak came and stripped it. Everything there that was really valuable was taken away.

9. *And the treasures of the king's house; he took all:*

He could not very well take any more. That is generally the way with the devil. God is satisfied with tithes; but Shishak and Satan take all.

9—11. *He carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made. Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house. And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.*

That was a come-down indeed, from shields of gold to shields of copper;—that is, I suppose, what is meant here by the brass. This is what the king suffered at the hands of Shishak; and it was an emblem of the condition of his people. The golden kingdom had became a brazen one.

12. *And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.*

Or, some behaved well. Even a measure of humiliation is acceptable

with God; and though he did not save the nation from being plundered, yet he did rescue it from being altogether smitten. Alas for Rehoboam, he did a bad day's work when he turned away from God!

13, 14. *So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one and forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the* LORD *had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the* LORD.

He was one of that fickle sort, neither here nor there; a compromising gentleman, not very definite in anything; he would go right if he were driven that way, and he would go wrong if he were led in that direction. Oh, how many there are who never prepare their hearts to seek the Lord! They are not determinately bad; they have not enough backbone in them to be leaders in evil; but they are never good for much, because they have never made up their minds to do the right at all costs; they have never had their heart prepared by the Holy Spirit to seek the Lord.

15, 16. *Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually. And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.*

So they pass away. One generation dies, and another follows. God grant that, when we fall asleep, it may not be with the sin of Rehoboam lying upon us, neither may we be succeeded by evil sons; but may we serve God in our day, and be followed by those who shall serve him still better! The Lord grant it! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—668, 666, 667.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 7TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 5th, 1889.

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"—1 Corinthians xi. 26.

FIRST, let me say that the Lord's supper is nothing to us unless we partake of it as spiritual persons in a spiritual way. We must understand what we are doing in coming to the communion table; the mere mechanical celebration will be vanity; it may even be a sin. To observe this ordinance aright, you must bring your mind in an awakened state, you must come with holy faith, and love, and concentrated thought. I do pray that we may so come to-night. I know how mechanical we all get. We even stand up and sing, and oftentimes we forget what we are singing while the sounds issue from our lips. We cover our eyes in prayer, but we do not always pray. There is such a thing as preaching from the mouth outward, instead of speaking from the heart; and I believe there is a kind of hearing which is dreadfully superficial, and can do the hearer no good. Now, if you come to the supper to-night, bring your hearts with you; and if your hearts are warm with love to Christ, desire to have them yet fuller of love to your Lord. I remember reading of a Mr. Welch, a very devout minister of the gospel in Suffolk, who was found weeping one day; and when he was asked by a brother minister why he wept, he said it was because he could love Christ more than he did. That was a very good reason for weeping. Now, let us love our Lord much to-night; and if we cannot feel the glow of love as we wish to feel it, let us weep to think that it is so. May the Spirit of God come and put life into our communion, that every child of God here may have real fellowship with Christ in the breaking of bread!

But now, let us get to our work. The Lord's supper, dear friends, is first of all a memorial. "This do in remembrance of me." It is intended to keep alive in our own hearts, and in the minds of others, the wondrous fact that the Son of God was here among men, and laid

down his life a sacrifice for sin. It is well known that a custom, a rite, a festival, has a very great historical power to keep up in the minds of men the recollection of a fact; and our Lord has selected this common meal, this supper, as a method by which men should be made to know to the very end of time that he died. There can be no doubt about the death of Christ, because through long ages all history bears record that Christian men and women have met together, and have eaten bread, and have drunk wine, to keep up the memory of his sufferings and death. This is better than if there had been a statue erected, or than if a document had been written, or than if a brass tablet had been inscribed. We are not without memorials of other sorts; especially we are not without books; but this perpetually celebrated feast, kept up without cessation, kept up in every country on the face of the earth, is one of the very best memorials that the death of Christ can have. All of you who come to the table to-night will be helping to keep alive in the memory of men the great fact that Jesus died.

But the Lord's supper is more than a memorial, it is a fellowship, a communion. Those who eat of this bread, spiritually understanding what they do, those who drink of this cup, entering into the real meaning of that reception of the wine, do therein receive Christ spiritually into their hearts. Their heart, soul, mind feeds upon Christ himself, and upon what Christ has done. We do not merely record the fact, but we enjoy the result of it. We do not merely say that Christ died; but we desire to die with him, and to live only as the result of his having died. We take scot and lot with Christ as we come to the table. We say deliberately, "Thine are we, thou Son of God, and all that we have; and thou art ours, and in testimony thereof we eat this bread, and we drink of this cup, to show that we are one with thyself, partners with thee in this great fellowship of love."

Well, now, if you want a permanent memorial, and a perpetual means of fellowship, it will be wise to have a rite or ceremony in which there shall also be a likeness to the fact that has to be remembered. This supper is therefore an exhibition, a showing, a setting forth, a proclamation of the death of Christ. That you may remember that Jesus died, there is something here that bears a resemblance to his death. That you may the better have fellowship with him in his death, here is something which is a vivid picture of that death, and which will help to bring it more clearly before your mind's eye. That is the subject for to-night's meditation,—this supper as a showing forth, an exhibition of Christ's death "till he come."

In speaking of this exhibition, this showing forth, we will consider, first, *what it shows;* secondly, *how it shows it;* and thirdly, *how long it is to show it.*

I. Thinking of this supper, that we are about to celebrate, we will consider, first, WHAT IT SHOWS. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do shew the Lord's death.*"

Brethren, to-night, we are to show, to exhibit, to demonstrate, to set forth, to symbolize, to represent, to picture the death of Christ. He lived, or he could not have died; that fact is, therefore, included in our confession of faith. But the point we specially set forth is this,

that he died, he who was born at Bethlehem, the Son of Mary, and who lived here on earth, being also the Son of God, in due time died, he gave his life a ransom for many. Why do we record that fact? To my intense grief, I have heard it said, even among a certain class of preachers, that we dwell too much upon the death of Christ. They ask why we do not talk more about his life. The death of a man, they say, is not so important, by a great many degrees, as his life. The Lord have mercy upon the miserable and ignorant men who talk in that fashion! But we have a reason for making so much of Christ's death. The Lord has instituted no memorial of his life, the memorial that he has instituted is to keep before his people the perpetual remembrance of his death. And why is that the case?

I take it, because *this is the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ.* The doctrine that he died, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God," is essential to the gospel. Leave out the vicarious sacrifice unto death, and you have left out the life of the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are some truths which ought to be preached in due proportion with other truths; but if they are not preached, souls may be saved; but this is a truth which must be preached, and if it be left out, souls will not be saved. I should have more hope of the salvation of a man hearing a Romish priest, with all his superstition, if he preached the death of Christ, than I should of one hearing a Unitarian, with all his intelligence, if he left out the doctrine of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. "The blood is the life thereof." "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Because the death of Christ is the life of the gospel, therefore it is that there is an ordinance to set forth that death "till he come."

And this is the more so, in the next place, because *this is the point where the gospel is always being assailed.* You shall find, in almost every controversy, that the fight thickens about the cross. It is around the standard that the foemen cluster. There the sword rings upon the armour, there the loudest shout is heard, there you see the garment rolled in blood. So the cross, the cross is the standard of our Christianity. Round the atoning sacrifice the controversialists gather. They think they are aiming at other things; but the real password is, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the Divine Substitute for men." If they could once get rid of the doctrine of the atoning sacrifice, they would destroy that which is the greatest tower of strength to the gospel of Christ; but, thank God, they cannot get rid of the cross! We can still sing,—

"The cross it standeth fast,
Hallelujah!
Defying every blast,
Hallelujah!
The winds of hell have blown,
The world its hate hath shown,
Yet it is not o'erthrown.
Hallelujah for the cross!
It shall never suffer loss!"

Therefore, set forth the atoning sacrifice of Christ, brethren, in this ordinance, "till he come."

So well does this supper set forth the death of Christ in that respect, that it has been argued by some brethren that, if a man comes to the communion table, unless he is a great liar, he has already made a confession of faith in Christ. I will not go that length; but there is a good deal of truth in the argument. If you truly eat and drink of this supper, you must believe in the atoning sacrifice; you come here under false pretences if you are not a believer in that; for, at the institution of this supper, the Saviour said, "This is my blood of the new testament (or covenant) which is shed for many for the remission of sins." The pardon of sin must be by the shedding of the blood of Christ; and if you reject the blood of Christ, you have rejected the true meaning of this supper, and certainly you cannot come here with a clear conscience. This supper, then, sets forth the great fact that Jesus died; and it is ordained to set that death forth because it is essential to the gospel, and because it is the point which is most fiercely attacked.

And you will notice, brethren, according to our text, that *this showing of the death of Christ is to be kept up through every age "till he come."* It will not be wanted after the coming of Christ, for reasons which we will speak of by-and-by; but until then it will always be wanted. Shall I always have to preach the doctrine of atonement? Yes, always. Shall we always have to set Christ forth evidently crucified among men? Yes, always. First, because we always need to have this truth set forth. You and I, who are firm believers in this glorious truth, yet cannot too often think upon it. I love to come every Lord's-day to the communion table; I should be very sorry to come only once a month, or, as some do, only once a year. I could not afford to come as seldom as that. I need to be reminded, forcibly reminded, of my dear Lord and Master very often. We do so soon forget, and our unloving hearts so soon grow cold. How is it with you, my brethren? I know that it is thus with me. I sing sometimes,—

> "Gethsemane, can I forget?
> Or there thy conflict see,
> Thine agony and bloody sweat,
> And not remember Thee!"

But that is the point of my argument. We need to go often to Gethsemane, and there see our Lord's agony and bloody sweat, that we may remember him. I suppose that, until we see his face, we shall never have one communion too many, and we shall never have a thought of Christ that is superfluous. Nay, banish all poetic thought rather than that I should lose a thought of him. Begone the most delightful classical expression, and the most charming thoughts of philosophers, if they would push out one thought of Jesus; for thoughts of Christ are golden thoughts, and thoughts of other things, however burnished by the wit and genius of men, are but poor metal compared with thoughts of Jesus. We need this supper for ourselves, brethren, and we should partake of it often, for that is what is meant by our Lord's words, "As oft as ye drink it." We need that often we should eat this bread, and drink this cup, and show his death for our own sins.

But this supper is as much needed for the sake of others. We are to show Christ's death that others may know about it, that others may be impressed by it, that others may be saved by it. I sometimes wonder, when I am talking to you upon this theme, that I do not preach much better; and yet, when I have done, I say to myself, "Well, how can there be anything better if one only tells the tale truly?" That God came here in human flesh, and for our sins did serve, did die, that he bore the vengeance due to our guilt, the punishment which our transgressions had incurred, brethren, that is poetry. It is essential poetry, even though I only put it into a child's speech. It wants no garnishing. The face of perfect beauty must not be touched with Jezebel's paints; and all the garnishing of eloquence that can be brought to such a fact as this is unnecessary, meretricious, and degrading. Oh, hear you the tale, and then, as you come to the table, remember what it is that you set forth, and say to yourself, "I am, by this action, telling a story more wonderful than all the histories of men put together. I am showing to those who look on something which angels desire to look into, which the most wonderful intelligences will, throughout all the ages, study with ever-growing wonder and delight—God Incarnate, suffering in the sinner's stead." Show that forth, brethren, for it is worth the showing.

II. But now, secondly, having mentioned what it is that this supper shows, let me prove to you HOW IT SHOWS IT.

It does so, first, *very instructively in the emblems themselves.* We want to tell men and to tell our own hearts that Jesus died. Well, see, here is bread; mark you, not a wafer, but a piece of household bread. And here is wine in a cup; not wine and water, but the true juice of the grape, which our Lord called "the fruit of the vine." What then? Here are bread and the fruit of the vine, separately. Bread, representing the flesh of Christ, has a million sermons in it. Shall I tell you its story? It was a grain of wheat, they threw it into the ground, they buried it beneath the clods, it lay there exposed to winter's cold. It sprang up, and many a frost nipped it in the green blade; but there came spring weather, and summertide, and the wheat grew and grew on till it turned into the yellow golden grain. See, they come along with a sharp sickle, and cut it down; it must feel the keen edge. After cutting it down, they take it away in sheaves. They spread it out upon the barn floor. Here are flails, which come hammering down upon it,—in those olden times they did use flails. Now they beat out the grain from the ear; and now, when they have all the grain separated from the straw, it must be winnowed, and the chaff must be blown away. Then they take this corn, and put it between two stones, and grind it. Woe unto thee, O grain, thou art ground into the finest flour! But it has not finished its history of suffering yet. When well ground, and separated from the bran, it is taken, and a woman kneads it with all her might, and makes it into dough. Nor is its suffering ended yet, for she thrusts it into the oven. Now does it feel the heat of the fire; and when the loaf is taken out of the oven, it is cut, or broken, and devoured. It is a story of suffering from the beginning to the end. Now take that cup, and look into its ruddy depths. Do you see that vine yonder? You expected to find it festooned on trellis-

work, a lovely object; but looking at it in the winter and spring, you say to yourself, "Is that a vine? It looks like an old, dead stick left in the ground." Yes, it has been cut down. Did you not see the pruner's knife? How sharply he cut! "Surely," you said, "he is killing that vine." No, vines are made to bear much fruit by being closely cut and pruned. But now it is summer, and in the early months of autumn the vine is loaded with red grapes; and those grapes must be taken off the vine, and severed from the branch. See, they are throwing them into the wine-press, heaps upon heaps; look how they are piled up! And what happens now? Men leap in upon them, and with their feet they tread the grapes. The blood of the grape runs out of the wine-press, red like ruddy gore. This is the history of the wine of which you drink, and so it comes to you. And, oh, I need not tell you of your Lord, how he was thrown into the wine-press, and how he suffered even unto death! These elements of bread and wine are stories to you, and emblems of suffering. You notice, too, that these emblems are separate. If I were to take the bread, and crumble it into the cup, and then pass it to you that you might drink of that curious mixture, you would not celebrate the Lord's death at all. It would not be possible, for it is the body with the blood separated from it that sets forth death. While the blood is in the veins, you have life; but when the blood is drawn away from the body, which is set forth to you in the pure white bread and in the red juice of the grape, then you have the picture of death; and in that way you show Christ's sufferings and death in the celebration of this supper. So much I have, I hope, made plain enough for all to understand.

Now notice *the manner of the use of these two elements*, for the manner of their use vividly shows Christ's death. I think it is in the Church Catechism that we are taught that the word "sacrament" means "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." That definition will do for this ordinance, which is the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

It is very remarkable how the emblems before us appeal to our various senses. Notice, first, the Saviour took the bread and the cup. You see them; they are before you, you can see them. After he had blessed them, he said, "Take." Did you ever see, in a very Ritualistic church, that little game played by the priest with his napkin held out under the chin of the communicant, and telling him to open his mouth, and popping the wafer in? This is not eating the Lord's supper, for the command at the institution of the Lord's supper was, "Take, eat." It is essential that you take it in your hand. "Take, eat." So there is another sense that is affected in this sacred exercise, that is, the sense of touch. Jesus took the bread, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, that they might employ the second sense. They had seen, now they touched. "Take, eat," said the Lord; and they held it in their hands. But never do you have the Lord's supper without an appeal to the ear, for he said, "This is my body." Whenever we break this bread, we say the same, "This bread is Christ's body," so there is an appeal to the ear. You put the bread and the wine into your mouth; there comes in your fourth sense, your taste, so

that four senses are made to assist you in realizing that Christ did really die, that his death is no dream, no fiction. It is not merely a man in a book, but a living man who died, a real man who poured out his life unto death for you. I have said that four senses are appealed to; but I might add the sense of smell also. There is an old proverb, "Nothing smells so sweet as bread;" and to a hungry man there is nothing so refreshing as the presence of bread which regales the nostril. The Lord has given us an ordinance here in which he brings our body to support our soul, and to render vivid to our mind by at least four, if not all of our five senses, this most blessed fact, that Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary and the Son of God, did really lay down his life a sacrifice for us.

But now I remind you of another thing. We show the death of Christ, in the next place, by *the mode of the disposal of this bread and this wine*, for these elements go into our bodies. They are received into the inner man, and are digested and assimilated there, and taken up into our system, to build us up; and herein we teach that Christ, dying for us, is to be received by faith into the heart. We are to believe in that death as being for us. We are to appropriate it as our own; we are to trust in it; we are to live upon it. It is to become part and parcel of our spiritual nature, and we are to be built up thereby, for Christ's death on the cross saves nobody to whom Christ does not come into the heart. If thou dost not believe, even Christ lifted up between earth and heaven will not save thee. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." But without receiving him, Christ is dead in vain so far as thou art concerned. Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter. This fact, I say, we set forth by the method of the disposal of the emblems.

And now, carefully note that *the spirit of this ordinance also is very instructive*. How does it begin? Jesus takes bread, and blesses it. In other words, he gives thanks. It is very usual to call this ordinance the Eucharist, or, the giving of thanks. That is the spirit of it; it is all through a giving of thanks. Now, mark you, there is no reason to give thanks for the death of Christ unless it was an atoning death, and an expiation for sin. I should regret, infinitely regret, that a good man should die as Jesus died unless there was an end to be accomplished by it worthy of that death. The end of Christ's death was that, dying for us, by the shedding of his blood, there might be remission of sins; and for that we may well give thanks. The communion begins with thanksgiving, but how does it continue? It continues by our sitting at ease. There are some who think that, to kneel at the communion is the most reverent posture. So it is, and I doubt not that God accepts their reverence; but it is a most unscriptural posture. There is more presumption than reverence in it, for to alter the ordinance of Christ even on the pretence of reverence is not justifiable. When our Lord first of all instituted the supper, they did not sit down as we do, but they reclined as the Orientals still do, at their ease, so much at their ease that the head of John was on the breast of Jesus. I cannot conceive anything more exactly the opposite of coming up to an altar rail, and kneeling down, than this reclining upon couches with your head upon your next neighbour's bosom. The fact is, that it meant

ease, it meant rest; and that is what the posture which we take up should mean. Our nearest approach to that which can be tolerated in our western clime is to sit as much as you can at ease, as a person in this country does at a banquet, as near an approach as possible to the method of the Oriental at his banquet. That is how the feast goes on; it began with a blessing, it proceeds with a restful posture. How does it end? After supper they sang a hymn. It was not a dirge, it was not funereal; they celebrated the death of Christ, but not with funereal rites. They sang a hymn, it was joyous, probably part of the great Hallel of the Jewish Passover. This indicates to us, and we set it forth, that the death of Christ is now a joyous event; that to the whole of his people it is not a thing to sigh over; but that, believing in Christ, it is a thing to thank God for, to be at ease about, and to sing over; and we set that forth by the manner in which we partake of this supper.

One thing more we set forth. *The persons who come to the table must be, according to Christ's rule, believers in him.* They, and they only, have a right to eat of this feast. Others eat and drink unworthily, and drink and eat condemnation to themselves. We do, therefore, say, albeit that there is no limit to the value of the sacrifice of Christ (that were inconceivable), yet he had a special object in it, and he died for a special people, which people are known by their being led to believe in him, to unite with him in a distinct affiance by trusting in him. Not for you all will this avail; but for all of you that believe, for so it is written, "For God so loved the world," so much and no more, "that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life,"—a universality which, nevertheless, has a speciality hidden in its inner self. Believe this, or else this death is not for thee. Trust Christ, or else thou shalt have no share in the blessings which his death has purchased. And we set that forth when, gathering at the table, we come as believers; but we are obliged to tell others that, if they are not believers, they must not come: they have no right to come.

III. My time has nearly gone, and therefore I must finish with the third point. We have seen what this supper shows, and how it shows it; now we are to consider HOW LONG IT IS TO SHOW IT.

I have tried, as best I could, in a very simple way, to show how this supper does symbolize and set forth the death of Christ. How long are we to do it? "*Till he come.*" Well, now, what does that teach us? When Jesus comes, we are to leave off observing the Lord's supper, but not till he comes.

It teaches us, then, that *there will always be a value in Christ's wondrous death.* God would not have us set forth a thing that is done with, a sucked orange, a mere shell out of which the seed is gone. If the death of Christ were not abundantly efficacious still, he would not have us set it forth. But to-night we can sing, with as much meaning and force as ever we could,—

> "Dear dying Lamb, thy precious blood
> Shall never lose its power,
> Till all the ransom'd Church of God
> Be saved to sin no more."

It is nearly nineteen hundred years since Jesus was here, and yet his blood is still powerful, his death can still take away sin. Come and try it to-night, some of you who have never believed in him; to-night, I say, at the close of this—

> "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
> The bridal of the earth and sky."

Come now, to-night, and yield thyself to the Lamb of God, and wash thee in his precious blood, and thou shalt be whiter than snow. That communion table is just now covered with a white cloth; but when it is uncovered, and you see the bread and the wine, they will say to you, "The atonement is still existing, it is still efficacious, it is still full of power." We celebrate the ordinance because Christ's death is still available for all who trust to it.

The next thing is, dear friends, that by saying that we will partake of this supper till Christ comes, we set forth our belief in *the perpetuity of this ordinance until the influence of Christ's death shall have been infallibly secured.* We are now in a world where men forget; and as long as we are in such a world, we must keep this sign-post, this direction to those who want to journey to heaven. We must never take this sign-post down till there will be no need of it because Christ will have come; and when he shall have come, beloved, we shall not then forget his death. When he shall come, do not think that we shall give up the Lord's supper because we give up thinking of him. Nay, we shall give it up because we shall then never give up thinking of him. He will be present with us; and he being present with us, we shall not need the help which now our weakness requires.

So then, in closing, I say to you that this supper is a window, a window of agate, and *the outlook of this supper is the Second Coming of the Lord from heaven.* This supper is also a gate of carbuncle, and through this gate we are to watch for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ from the throne of his glory to this earth. The Lord shall come. As surely as we are sitting here in this house, so surely will he, before long, appear a second time on earth, "without sin, unto salvation"; and we mean to keep up this feast "till he come."

> "See, the feast of love is spread;
> Drink the wine, and break the bread:
> Sweet memorials, till the Lord
> Call us round his heavenly board.
> Some from earth, from glory some,
> Severed only '*Till he come!*'"

Could *you* keep on feasting "till he come", my unsaved hearer? I think that you had better weep and mourn, repent and believe, and so get ready for his appearance. But those who are ready may just keep on feasting upon him, and rejoicing in him, till he puts in his last and glorious appearance. God help us to continue so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVI. 1—20.

This chapter contains some of the most precious words that the Lord Jesus uttered before he died upon the cross.

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

Or, as the Revised Version translates it, "be made to stumble." Christ would not have his children stumble. There is an offence of the cross, but he would not have us needlessly offended. How careful is our dear Saviour not to give us offence! We ought to be very careful not to offend him; but what condescension it is on his part that he should be careful of offending us, or of permitting us to be offended, or made to stumble.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

Can you remain faithful to your Master then, when you lose your position, or your character, or men put you out of the synagogue? When you nearly lose life itself, and when they shall think they are doing God's service by seeking to kill you, can you stand true to Christ then? The Master knew that days of bitter persecution would soon come upon his followers, so he strengthened them against those evil times that were approaching.

3. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.*

It is ignorance that makes men hate God's people and his Son: "They have not known the Father, nor me." Truly did Paul say, "I did it ignorantly in unbelief;" and for such persecutors there is full and free forgiveness. When they turn unto the Lord, even this sin shall be forgiven them; but they will not forgive themselves for having committed it; and, like Paul, they will count themselves the chief of sinners because they persecuted the Church of God.

4. *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

"You will then see my foresight, my care for you, my prophetic power. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. You will not be taken by surprise." If any of you who have lately been converted should meet with great opposition, do not be surprised; Jesus has told you to expect it; and if the fire should get seven times hotter, count it no strange thing that the fiery trial has happened unto you. It has happened unto others before you, and will happen to others after you; therefore be prepared for it.

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

"While I was with you, you could run to me, and tell me all about your trials and difficulties. If anybody was hard with you, I could come to your help, and comfort you. You did not need to know these things before, so I did not tell you of them. You do need to know them now, and now I tell you of them."

5. *But now I go my way to him that sent me;*

Christ was going to the cross, and to the grave, and afterwards to heaven.

5. *And none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?*

For want of asking that question, Christ's disciples were full of grief. Sometimes we do not ask enough questions. We ask too many questions of doubt; it would be well if we were to ask a few more questions of believing curiosity. There are some things that we ought to wish to know; and Christ encourages his people to come to him for information.

6. *But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

When a poor Christian friend is dying, you are full of sorrow because he is going away from you. Why do you not ask whither he is going? If he is going home to heaven and to glory, why, then be comforted about him; you have no cause for distress on his account.

7. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away:*

"It is better for you that I should be absent than that I should be present." Their Lord was their joy, their Leader, their Teacher, their Comforter. He is going away, and he tells them that his absence will be a gain to them. "It is expedient for *you* that I go away."

7. *For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.*

Now, it is better for us to have the Comforter than to have Christ here in bodily presence; for if Christ were here to-night, in this Tabernacle, where could we put him so as to be equally near each one of us? I should certainly want him up here on the platform; and you, up there in the top gallery, would say, "Well, we are a long way off; why should he not come up here?" You see, if it is bodily presence that is enjoyed, some must be near, and some must be far off; but now that Christ has gone up to heaven, his Spirit is here. Where is that Spirit? On the platform, I hope, and everywhere else. Any of you who desire it may have the Holy Spirit's presence. The Lord says, "I will put my Spirit within you." Better than the bodily presence of Christ is the real, though spiritual, presence of the Holy Ghost.

8. *And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:*

What, a Comforter reprove? Yes. The Holy Spirit never comforts till he has reproved. There must be a reproof of sin before there can be comfort in Christ. And while the Spirit comforts saints, he reproves the world.

9. *Of sin, because they believe not on me;*

The greatest sin in all the world is, not believing on Jesus. Our Lord did not say, "Of sin, because of the evil of drunkenness." That is a great sin, a cursed sin, and there are other great sins; but Christ said, "Of sin, because they believe not on me." That is the root sin, the foundation sin, the sin that keeps a man in his sin.

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

It is God's righteousness that takes Christ up to heaven. He has been here; he has lived a perfect life; he has died a sacrificial death; and God has shown his acceptance of him, for he has gone to his reward.

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

When Christ came here, there was a crisis, a judgment; and sin was judged and condemned; and the prince of the world, the chief sinner in the world, received his death-blow: "the prince of this world is judged."

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

See how Christ teaches us slowly, wisely, prudently. There are some things which some of you young Christians do not know; you could not bear them if you did know them. You shall know them when you can bear them. A man with a doctrine that he cannot handle is often like a child with a tough piece of meat which he cannot bite. Give the child milk, or the crumb of the loaf. Do not put crusts into his mouth till he has teeth to bite them; do not give him meat till he can digest it. See the gentle Saviour's way of imparting instruction. He teaches us much, but not too much at a time.

13. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*

See, my dear brethren in the ministry, how little store the Holy Ghost sets by originality. We have men nowadays straining to be original. Strain the other way, for listen, "He shall not speak of himself,"—not even the Holy Ghost,—"He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak." He is the Repeater of the Father's message, not the inventor of his own. So let it be with us ministers. We are not to make up a gospel as we go along, as I have heard some say. We are not to shape it to the times in which we live, and suit it to the congregations to which we speak. God forbid! Let this be true of every one of us, "He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak."

14. *He shall glorify me:*

The Holy Ghost does that; therefore, surely we, who are the preachers of the gospel, should aim at the same object: "He shall glorify me." It should be our one desire to magnify and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

14—16. *For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me; and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father.*

That was a very simple statement, every Sunday-scholar understands it now; but the twelve apostles did not understand it when they heard it.

17, 18. *Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

They said this "among themselves." This was not a wise course, for what can ignorance learn of ignorance? Here were disciples questioning one another; none of them knew anything, and yet they were trying to teach one another. If they had all gone to their Master, how much more quickly would they have understood his words! Take everything to Jesus. Try everything by the Word of God. Do not believe what you hear because I say it, or because somebody else says it. Go to the Word of God to learn what you need to know, and to the Spirit of God to teach you the meaning of what you read.

19, 20. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament,*

Christ would die; he would go away and be unseen. On the cross he would depart out of this life; in the tomb he would be hidden from his disciples: "Ye shall weep and lament."

20. *But the world shall rejoice:*

But not for long; the world's joy at Christ's death was soon over.

20. *And ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*

I think we may leave off our reading at this verse, with these words to flavour our mouth all this week: "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." God grant that it may be so with many here present, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 820, 802.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TEN WRONG KINDS OF HEARERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 14TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 21st, 1889.

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God."—Isaiah lviii. 1, 2.

IF we would understand these words aright, we must remember that the people here mentioned were not good people; they were a set of hypocrites. This is quite clear if we read the verses that follow our text: "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward."

It is a very pleasing sign when people like to go up to the house of God. I do not know of a more beautiful sight than the present congregation, with every seat occupied, and some people even willing to stand to hear the Word preached. There are many who would give all they have to see such a sight. How sad is the opposite of this! An empty place of worship, people loafing about at home all

the Sabbath-day, not caring to listen to eternal truth—that is a very melancholy state of things. We take delight in seeing persons anxious to get in to hear the Word.

I know that there are some here who would not be absent from the assembly of God's people on any account. When they are ill, their Sabbaths are always dull to them; and if they go into the country, they seem to miss the opportunity of hearing the gospel as they have been accustomed to hear it. All this is most pleasant and most delightful; yet remember that there may be nothing at all in it. This congregation will soon scatter, and break up; and when it is divided into its separate particles, and nothing is left of it, it may come to pass that nothing will be left of it in another sense, that is, that there will be no result whatever from our meeting together. As I said in the prayer, it may be just one big wave breaking on the shore, dying away, and leaving nothing behind. I pray God that it may not be so. Yet, my dear friends, you who are the most regular hearers of the Word, and who have been so from your childhood, need to be warned that the mere hearing of the gospel will not save you; ay, and the continuous hearing of it may increase your responsibility, and do nothing more. If you are hearers only, it may come to pass that, at the last, you will have heard for the worse, and not for the better, for the only record that will remain of all those Sundays, and of all those sermons, will be that you have just so many times wilfully hardened your neck, and continued in rebellion against the tender mercy of God.

What I am going to do to-night is, not so much to preach Christ, though I trust I shall not fail to do that, as to deal with different classes of hearers, and to show the difference that there is between those who hear without acceptance and without profit, and those who hear so as to please God, those whose hearing becomes a part of worship, those who hear desiring benefit themselves, and whose hearing becomes a saving act, for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

While I try to draw a few distinctions, not occupying too much of your time upon any one of them, I invite every person here to examine his own self, whether he be in the faith. I invite every hearer to put himself into the crucible to see what is his true condition in the sight of God. Never mind your neighbour; let him use his own ears for himself, and do you use your ears for yourself just now. Better still, let each one of us go to the Lord with the psalmist's prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

I. First, THERE ARE SOME WHO GET NO GOOD OUT OF THE HEARING OF THE GOSPEL, BECAUSE THEIR HEARING IS SOON FOLLOWED BY FORGETTING. It is the truth that they hear, and for a time they hear it with considerable attention; but it is only for a time. They regard the exercise of hearing as being confined to the time which the sermon occupies; and with some, the shorter that time is, the better they like the discourse. When the sermon is over, it is done with as far as they are concerned. They may happen to remember that they were

at such a place, on such a day, and heard a sermon from such a text; but that is all that they remember. They are glad that the preacher's word should drop as the dew, and distil as the rain; but they like it to be like the rain when it trickles off the leaf of the plant, and leaves no mark, or like the dew which is exhaled ere ever the sun is up. They do not want to have any abiding result from the hearing of the Word. It is a temporary thing with them; I was going to say it is a trumpery thing with them. They hear the preacher's message, the service is over, and at the door of the sanctuary they leave behind everything that they have gathered there; in fact, they have really gathered nothing.

Now, it is not so with the profitable hearer. He says to himself, "That which I am about to hear to-day is God's Word. My soul, take heed that thou retain it, and lay it by in store! Thou art listening to a gospel which is the wonder of the ages. Thou art hearing of mysteries which angels desire to look into. Thou art hearing the story of God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, that he might redeem men from going down into the pit. Now, my soul, hear for eternity!" Ask that the impression made upon thee shall last in life, in death, and be seen at the day of judgment to be a saving, enduring, sanctifying impression upon thee. Oh, that men felt that to come to hear the gospel is not like going to the market to hear goods cried, or going to an auction to hear an estate set forth and extolled, or attending a lecture to listen to what was done in the rocks in the ages past, or what is going on in the stars that glitter in the heavens! These are all things that will pass away. We are come together to hear about God, heaven, hell, the soul, eternity, immortality, the judgment, the eternal reward—everlasting life, and the everlasting doom—eternal death. Here is something worth the hearing. I sometimes think that I have no need to fret myself about how I put these things before my hearers, for if men were in their senses, they would naturally want to know the truth about their souls, and knowing that, in whatever language it was put, they would be quite content. If there were a lecture, to-morrow evening, upon how to make five hundred pounds a day, if a man could tell you how to do that, if he spoke in broken English, you would be quite satisfied so long as you could put in practice what he was teaching you. And when we are teaching men the way to heaven, the way to peace with God, the way to get sin pardoned and the heart renewed, it ought not to matter how we deliver the message; the news itself ought to be so precious that men would be glad to hear it even though we stuttered and stammered it out. Alas, it is not so; but it would be so if all men were the right kind of hearers! Wrong hearers belong to the Slate Club; they write on a slate what they hear, and then wipe it all out. But the Christian hearer has the gospel message "engraved as in eternal brass," and it abides with him world without end.

II. Next, THERE ARE SOME WHOSE HEARING IS THE HEARING OF MAN, AND NOT THE LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF GOD. Dear friends, if you go into some places of worship, where the preacher does not believe that the Word of God is inspired, you may listen to him or not as you like. He has no claim on your attention if what he preaches has not,

"Thus saith the Lord," at the back of it. You have as much right to require him to attend to you as he has to expect you to attend to him. He has to tell you, and he will tell you his latest thoughts, his freshest inventions, his most novel excogitations. Well, you may throw them over the wall, and have done with them, if you like. If he is a learned and clever man, you may attach to what he says the importance which you ought to attach to the words of a clever man; but you are not required to pay any more attention than that to anything that he has to say; but if we plead with you that what we read to you is God's Word, every syllable of it, and that what we preach, if it be not taken from God's Word is nothing, that its only weight and force lie in this, that we deliver inspired truth, putting it into our own language, but still giving you the truth as far as we know it, as a revelation from God, then at your own peril will you refuse it. These gentlemen, who themselves deny the inspiration of the Book of God, thereby renounce all claim upon your attention except such as you like to give to your fellow-men; but if a man can say, "Thus saith the Lord," and the Lord has sent him in the power of his Spirit, and by his anointing, to deliver his gospel as the gospel of God and not the gospel of man, then I pray you to give an earnest and a diligent heed to the things that you hear lest by any means you should let them slip. We are nothing of ourselves; but if we deliver God's message, that message is everything, and we can say to our hearers, with deep solemnity, "How shall ye escape if ye neglect so great salvation?" If this be what God really speaks to you, then woe unto you if ye will not hear it; and if this be in very truth an inspired message from heaven, then shall you be blessed if you hear it, for it is written, "Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live." It makes all the difference between hearer and hearer whether you are hearing God or hearing only a man. If you hear the sermon as the word of man, it shall be the word of man to you, and do you no good; but if you hear it as the Word of God, if you search your Bibles to see whether these things are so; and if, finding them to be God's Word, you receive them, and tremble at them, and do honour to them as coming from God, then they are able to save your souls, and they will save your souls. Oh, my dear hearers, this may not seem a great point; but it is a truly essential one! Here we may divide our hearers. They who hear the gospel as God's voice, hear it to live; and they who hear it as the mere prelection of man, hear it in vain.

III. Let me draw another line of distinction, a pretty clear one, too. THERE ARE SOME WHO WILL HEAR THAT WHICH PLEASES THEM; BUT THEY WILL NOT HEAR THAT WHICH TRIES THEM. I know my hearers pretty well by this time. There is one who likes good sound doctrine, and if you preach doctrine to him, he says, "Oh, ah, that is delicious!" Give him a precept. "Ugh!" he says, "I do not like that, you know. I never care much about duties." You are a bad hearer; and you will get no blessing out of it. There is another man who likes to hear about the practical part of Christianity. He belongs to the Ethical Society; but if you give him Scriptural teaching about the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, he grinds his teeth, and he is ready to turn on his heel, and depart in a rage. That is not the kind

of hearer whom God will accept, or who will get any good out of what he hears. There are some hearers who like a sermon when it just brushes their fur the right way. "Oh!" they say, "that is the right sort of preacher for us. Those are our sentiments. Now we can go on as we have been going. See what excuses he makes for us. He will allow us to be Christians and worldlings, too. That is the kind of preacher we like, one of your liberal sort." But the true hearer says to himself, "I do not ask to be pleased. Give me the man who just tells me the truth though it vexes me at the time that I hear it." I do not want a doctor of the sort that says, "Oh, my dear sir, there is very little indeed the matter with you! You want just a week's rest and change, and then you will be all right," all the while knowing that you have a deadly and incurable disease upon you. Do you think that such a man deserves his guinea from the patient he is deceiving? Give me the doctor who examines me through and through, who finds out to the best of his knowledge what ails me, and then deals with me like an honest man, not trying to make out that I am better than I am, but who tells me what my disease really is, and treats me for what he knows is wrong. Oh, yes, God's ministers are not sent to please men! We are not sent to tickle itching ears, but to drive the sword of God's Spirit into the hearts of men, for he says, "Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth." God's prophets are rough hewers. They come with the axe, and with the rod; they come not to fiddle while you dance, nor to blow the trumpet to tell you of a victory won without fighting. Ah, sirs, you are bad hearers if you cannot hear that which rasps you, that which stings you, but which is honest truth, and is meant to make you repent of your sins. Give me not the man who makes me merry, but the man who makes me penitent; not the man who sends me home filled with a fine conceit of myself, but the man who, whatever I think of him, makes me think badly of myself, and brings me to my knees to seek mercy through Jesus Christ my Saviour. This point reveals a great difference among hearers, does it not?

IV. Now, there is another class, with whom I would deal next, namely, THOSE WHO ALWAYS WANT TO HEAR SOMETHING NEW. We have in London a sort of flying camp of people who always turn up when there is anything fresh. Every new man gets a congregation for a time out of these celestial gipsies, that put up their tents on every common. You know this sort of people. If there is a new thing cried up, they are after it. There will be another novelty in six months' time, and they will be after that just as eagerly. They are always looking out for something fresh. Did you ever grow any fruit trees? If so, did your gardener ever recommend that they should be transplanted every six months? If so, the apple-chamber may be as small as you like. That kind of hearer, who first hears this, and then hears that, and then hears the other, and after that a fourth, and a fifth, and a sixth thing, and always likes the last new toy best, is a baby to begin with, and he remains a baby to the end of the chapter. No, give me the truth that I knew as a boy, and fed upon then, and let me feed upon it still. As I said this morning, the true Israelite was as well fed on the manna after forty years as he was at the first. It is

the mixed multitude that wants the quails, and something else, but the heir of Canaan, the true Israelite, is satisfied to eat the bread that came down from heaven. He wants nothing better. He knows that there cannot be anything better. His prayer is, "Lord, evermore give us this bread."

Do I address any here who go about from one place to another in this style? You sheep that never stop in one pasture, how will you ever fatten, how will you ever grow spiritually strong? Besides, I think your conduct shows that you do not know the great secret after all. If you did, you would be of his mind who said, "The old is better;" and having tasted that, you would keep to it even to the end.

V. Let me draw another line of distinction. THERE ARE SOME HEARERS WHOSE HEARING IS ALL FOR THE ELOQUENCE OF THE SPEAKER, AND NOT FOR THE SUBSTANCE OF THAT WHICH IS SPOKEN. That comes home to some of you, I know. If a man can speak thoroughly well, and is a man of fluent utterance, a man of dramatic action, a man who makes the subject live before your eyes, that is the preacher whose words you will remember; but he may preach any doctrine he likes, or no doctrine at all, that is not the point you are looking at. Why, surely, you are like stupid people who will go to a shop, because it is such a handsome shop, no matter what is sold in it! It may be utter rubbish, and your money may be all wasted; but then it is such a pretty shop, is it not? Why, you good housewives know better than to do that! Many a man has a pretty shop, but his wares are bad; buy not of him, I pray you. We do not want, on the few Sundays that we have, the few days which we have to live, and with death so near, and judgment so tremendous, to go to the house of God merely to have primroses and pretty flowers presented to us by the preacher Oh, for God's sake, put your flowers away! These souls are being damned; come to close grips with them, sir, show them the way to heaven, and leave your flowers until they get there, and then they will not care for your tawdry, artificial eloquence! The only eloquence that is worth having is that of the heart, that which comes straight up from the soul of a man; and he speaks well because he speaks out of his heart.

O sirs, I charge you, do not so insult the God of heaven as to spend his Sabbath-day in merely listening to big words and fine oratory! What is this but to turn the chapel into a theatre, and to make the preacher to be a mere performer? I had rather use market language, and be as vulgar as vulgarity itself, and carry souls to heaven, than be a very Demosthenes, or a Cicero, and leave men's hearts untouched. Alas, that there are hearers to whom the words are everything, and the sense is nothing!

VI. I will draw another line, helping you at the same time to draw one for yourself. THERE ARE MANY WHO HEAR THE GOSPEL, BUT DO NOT HEAR IT FOR THEMSELVES. They hear it as people look at a picture. You know what we do with it; we stand, and look at the foreground, and judge as to the distance, and the side lights, and the perspective, and so on (I do not know much about the terms of painting), and we just say, "That is a very beautiful view, that piece of water yonder, that wood, those trees, the cattle, all are very pretty."

Is not that how many people hear sermons? "Under the first head, did you notice so-and-so?" Or, "Under the second head, did you observe what the preacher said?" "When he came to that point, I thought it was rather well-turned." "I did not like so much that observation toward the close of the sermon; I thought that was rather rough." Yes, you see, you are judging the discourse as if it were a painting. That is all it is to you; but is this what it was meant to be? No, the true hearer looks into the Word of God as into a glass in which he may see himself as he really is; and when he sees himself in that glass, he says, "I did not know that I had that spot over the left eye. I was not aware that I had that blotch on my forehead. I must go and wash and be cleansed." It is well to hear a discourse that makes you see yourself as you are in God's sight. Many when they hear a sermon say, "I wonder how So-and-so would feel that sermon." What have you to do with him? Lend anything that you have to spare; but do not lend your ears. They will never come home so sound as when you lent them out. Keep your ears for your own use, and let the truth go home to your own heart; for this, and this only, is the kind of hearing that will ever save the soul. When you yourself hear for yourself, then you may yourself get right with God, and live by faith in Christ Jesus.

VII. Now I will mention a point which, I am afraid, will come home to a very large number now present. THERE IS AMONG HEARERS TOO MUCH OF UNPREPARED HEARING. I will tell you what I mean. The man comes fresh from the shop. That I do not mind; but perhaps he comes in fresh from care, from anger, from quarrelling, from the use of unhallowed language; and he comes in to hear the Word of God with his ears stopped up. Now, the right way to hear so as to get a blessing is to hear with prayer, to come up to hear what God the Lord shall speak, praying all the while, "O God, bless the message to my soul! Send me strength to-night through some part of what is said or sung that I may really be fit to hear thy Word. Prepare me, for the preparation of the heart is from thee. Make me like a plot of ploughed land that, when the seed falls upon me, I may receive it, and bring forth a harvest." Now, my dear hearers, do you think that we do really prepare ourselves enough for the hearing of the Word of God? Do you not think that we lose a great blessing because we do not come prepared to hear what God the Lord will say unto us?

I have sometimes been greatly rejoiced when I have seen the numbers of persons who have been brought to Christ by my preaching; but I have always taken a very large discount off anything like praise that I might give to myself, for I have said, "Why, those people as a rule come on purpose to hear me!" When I have preached in the country, the people have come there on purpose to hear, and have had almost to fight to get in, and they have made up their minds that they are going to hear something that they want to hear, and something that will be a blessing to them, and they have sat with their mouths wide open, taking in every word. Of course, anybody can open oysters when they open their shells themselves. When people come prepared, then it is that their hearts are readily reached; but when people come prejudiced, with their shells tightly shut up, when they do not mean to

hear, do they wonder that no good comes to them through the discourse? How could it? Only by a wonderful act of the sovereignty of divine grace could they expect to get a blessing.

VIII. There is a further distinction that I must mention. THERE ARE MANY WHO COME TO GOD'S HOUSE TO HEAR FROM A LOW MOTIVE, and such do not usually get a blessing. Some come from a very base motive. We have known some come that they may catch up a word with which they may find fault. Oh, dear hearts, if you want to find fault with me, you need not listen for five minutes! I shall always give you plenty of opportunity; and let me tell you another thing, I shall not fret if you find the opportunity. It will not in the least degree trouble me. I would rather that you should find fault than that you should be quite indifferent. If you will only let the Word enter your hearts, you may do what you will with me; kick me, if you like, only mind that you get to heaven yourself. There are some who make a man an offender for a word. They turn over all the basket of fish; and because there is one that does not smell quite sweet, they cry it all over the market. That is their style of acting towards the preacher. They would not like to be dealt with in that way themselves. It is a base motive altogether. Some come from another motive; there is one here to-night. He has come up to see his brother; he does not generally go to a place of worship, but John said to him, "William, come to the Tabernacle with me to-night." He does not like to offend John, and so he comes. Another young man has come because there is a young woman who comes here. I am not going to blame him for that; but still, it is not an honourable motive for going to hear the Word of God. Another has come to see the Tabernacle, to look at the building; and another has heard that the preacher is such a queer man. He will come, and just see what he really is like. That is a poor motive. Many of you come because—well, you have only come here because your mother comes here. You come because it is the custom and the habit; and you would not like to become perpetual Sabbath-breakers, forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. If that is all you come for, you will get it, and it is nothing. But if you come to hear the Word, saying, "I come to weigh it, to see whether it is God's Word, and if it is, I will follow it; if it comes to me with the power of the Holy Ghost, commending itself to my conscience, I will obey it, I will yield to it, for I want to find salvation through the Word of God, and I come with that intention." I do not believe you will come a dozen times, any one of you, to hear the gospel with a view of finding Christ in it, but what you will find him. "He that seeketh findeth."

IX. I must draw yet another distinction, and that is, that MANY COME TO HEAR THE WORD, BUT AFTER HAVING HEARD IT, THERE IS NO IMPROVEMENT IN THEM. One of our brethren told me, just now, that a friend on the market said to him, "Do you always hear Mr. Spurgeon?" "Yes," he answered, "I have heard him these five-and-twenty years." The other said, "Then you ought to be a good fellow." "Well," said I, "he did not say you were a good fellow, did he?" "No, but he said I ought to be." If you have heard the gospel for twenty-five years, you ought to be a good fellow. If it is

the Word of God that you have heard, and you have not improved by it, surely you are becoming like that fig-tree that brought forth no fruit. At last the mandate went forth, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" But, alas, there are many who hear the Word for years, but are none the better for all their hearing.

X. Lastly, THERE ARE SOME PERSONS WHO DO NOT HEAR TO PROFIT BECAUSE THEY DO NOT BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. You have not accepted the Christ who has been preached. You have heard about faith, but you have not believed. You have heard about repentance, but you have never repented. What do you come for if you never make any practical use of what you hear? Why do you come? A man keeps a shop on the Causeway, and you go into the shop when he opens it on Monday. You go up and down, look at all the things, and go out again. Do the same on Tuesday and Wednesday, ask to see his goods, and look them all over, but do not buy anything. Try that for a week, and you will get some very clear hints that you are not wanted there. If you go to a shop, you are expected to buy. I would like to give some of you a plain hint about that matter. You have come to my shop, and turned my goods over, but you have not bought anything. Is my price too high? It is "without money, and without price"; so you cannot say that. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Come and take the Saviour, and he is yours. Trust him, and you are saved. Why, would a person go to see a physician, and go often, and pay his guinea, as some of you pay your pew-rents, and yet never take the physic, never get the prescriptions made up; but just get the directions, and then neglect them? It is absurd: such a man as that must be a fool. I will not say that anybody here is a fool; but I do not know what else he is if he understands what he must do to escape from the wrath to come, and yet never does that, so as to escape from that wrath. This line is a very clear and distinct one, and I wish that we might cross it to-night if we have never before crossed it. Cross the line by decision for Christ. That is the point. Thou hast heard aright if thou hast found Christ. Thou hast heard for nothing if thou hast not found him. If thou hast looked to him upon the cross, thou hast heard to thine eternal profit, for he that looks to him shall live. If thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, thou art born of God. If thou art trusting thyself wholly to him, thou hast eternal life, for he that believeth in him hath everlasting life; but if thou believest not in Christ, thou mightest as well have heard the noise of Cheapside as have heard the sound of the gospel; thou mightest as well have heard the roll of the drum at the barracks as have listened to the proclamation of Jesus Christ, for all the good that it will ever bring to you. Now hear God's message to every one of you to-night, you who have not yet believed: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thine house." God help thee to do it, for his dear love's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—488, 508, 525.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XIII. 6—30.

Verse 6. *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

It was a fig tree, a fruit-bearing tree by profession, so it ought to have borne fruit. It was planted; it was not a wild tree, it was planted in a vineyard, in the proper place for fig trees to grow, in good soil; and therefore the owner of it had a right to come and look for fruit on it; but he found none. Have we not here, to-night, some who are planted in the Church of God who ought, by their profession, to be bearing fruit, but they are not? Christ has come, and he has looked for fruit; but he has found none.

7. *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

The owner seems to say, "If I had not found fruit the first year, I should have thought that the season was unfavourable; if I had found no fruit the second year, I might have thought that peradventure the tree was a little out of condition, and would come round again; but when I come for three years, and three years consecutively, and I find no fruit, then it is clear that the fig tree is a barren one. Why should it stay here, and spoil the soil, occupy the place that a good fig tree might have occupied, and take away the nutriment from other trees?" So if, after many years, some of you have brought forth no fruit, God may well complain about you. You are eating the bread that might have nourished a saint. You are occupying a place in which your influence is injurious to others. Others do less because you do nothing. I pray the Holy Spirit to bring this home to the conscience of any barren professor whom it may concern, lest the command should go forth, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

8, 9. *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

Even the vinedresser's pleading has a limit: "Give it one more year." He admits that the time must come for the axe to cut down the tree that is fruitless. The cumber-ground tree cannot stand for ever; it is unreasonabl that it should. And you cannot be permitted to live for ever in sin; you cannot be allowed to taint the air with blasphemy for another fifty years. There must come an end to such a life as yours, and that end may come very soon. The edge of the axe is sharp, and the hand that wields it is strong. Beware, O barren tree!

10. *And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath.*

When there happened a very remarkable miracle. The parable that preceded it was a parable of judgment; the miracle that followed was a miracle of mercy and grace.

11, 12. *And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him,*

You can see her slowly moving along, bent double. Hers was a painful walk, but she came at Christ's call.

12, 13. *And said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.*

See what Christ can do. After I had preached this morning, I had to

speak with just such a woman as this, one who has been, for many years, the victim of deep despondency. How I wished that I could lay my hands on her, and say, "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity"! But we cannot work such a miracle as that. It is Christ who must do it all; and blessed be his name, he is always great at a pinch! Christ loves to come in at a dead lift. When we are all beaten, and we have reached man's extremity, then it is Christ's opportunity. Oh, you poor despairing woman, bent double by your sadness, the Lord's hand can restore you: and we pray for you to-night, even the thousands of Israel pray for you at this moment! Lord, lay thine hand upon that poor child of infirmity!

14. *And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation,*

Wretched creature, to be indignant at Christ's doing good! There is no reckoning with self-righteous people. They are mad themselves, and they think others so.

14, 15. *Because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite,—*

It served him right. This is just the word that would naturally come to the lips of the Saviour. Because he was loving and tender, he could not endure this hypocritical indignation: "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite,"—

15, 16. *Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?*

A very conclusive argument. You may do deeds like this on the Sabbath; and you may come and be healed on the Sabbath, even though it should involve you in a journey. It is so needful that you should get the bread of heaven, so needful that you should get the blessing of Christ, that on this day you may come and be healed.

17—19. *And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him. Then said he, Unto what is the kingdom of God like? and whereunto shall I resemble it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and cast into his garden; and it grew, and waxed a great tree; and the fowls of the air lodged in the branches of it.*

You get a little grace to-night; let that Divine Man take but a grain of the mustard seed of his grace, and drop it into your heart, which he will have prepared like a garden, and there is no telling what will come of it. That sigh, that tear, that wish, will grow into holiness of life and zeal of conduct. It may be but very little in its beginning, but it will grow. Both good and evil begin with very small eggs, but they grow into great things.

20. *And again he said, Whereunto shall I liken the kingdom of God?*

Now take the bad side, and see how the kingdom of God may be perverted and injured by evil influences.

21. *It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*

That woman of Rome has hidden her leaven in the church, and it has leavened the whole; and now the woman of intellect has put her leaven into the church. Conceited self-invention of new doctrines, perversion of the simplicity of the gospel, that kind of leaven has been hidden in the meal of the church, and it is leavening the whole. God help us to keep out the leaven both of Romanism and of Rationalism!

22. *And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.*

His face was toward the cross, he was working his passage to his sacrifice, and preaching his way to that place where he should complete our redemption. This is a wonderful picture of Christ: "teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem."

23. *Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved?*

What business is that of ours? Our business is far more practical, to be saved ourselves, and to endeavour to be the means of saving others. Jesus did not answer the question; but he did what was better.

23, 24. *And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

You can get into the broad road without striving; but you must "strive to enter in at the strait gate." Strive for that which requires self-denial, that which humbles you, that which goes against the grain, that which is not according to human nature. Do not imagine that grace is to be had while you are half asleep, and that heaven is to be gained on a feather bed. Strive, strive, for many will seek in vain to enter. Seeking is not enough; it must come to a holy violence: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." When will that be? That will be when you are in another state.

25. *When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us;*

They will be very respectful; they will call him, "Lord." They will be very earnest; they will pray, "Lord, Lord." They will be very simple and very honest in their request: "Open unto us." They will be very personal: "Open unto *us*." Such will the prayers of the ungodly be when they wake up to the fact that they are shut out of heaven.

25, 26. *And he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.*

They came to the communion-table. They used to hear sermons indoors and out of doors. "Thou hast taught in our streets."

27. *But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.*

They shall be judged by their works. If they were workers of iniquity, it proved that they were unrenewed and unsaved. Christ will not endure their company, but will say to them, "Depart from me."

28. *There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.*

You who thought that you had a share in the kingdom of God, and were, by birth, the natural heirs of it: "You yourselves thrust out."

29, 30. *And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*

The least likely to be saved shall be saved; the blackest sinners, the vilest outcasts, the grossest unbelievers, shall be brought to repentance and faith, and shall be saved; while those who were first in privileges, children of godly parents, professors of religion, those who appeared in every way likely to be saved first, will be left to the last, and be shut out of the kingdom of God, never to enter. God grant, in his infinite mercy, that nobody in the Tabernacle to-night may be of that unhappy number! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S WORKS MADE MANIFEST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 21ST, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, May 12th, 1889.

"Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents" (that he was born blind): "but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."—John ix. 3.

NEVER attribute any special sorrow endured by men to some special sin. There is a tendency to consider that those on whom the tower in Siloam fell must have been sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem; and if any have met with a very sudden death, we are apt to suppose that they must have been exceedingly guilty; but it is not so. Very godly men have been burned to death in a train; I remember one who came to that terrible end. Many holy men have been drowned on board ship when they have been going about their Master's errands. Some of the most gracious men that I ever met have dropped dead without a moment's warning. You cannot judge of a man's state before God by that which happens to him in the order of providence: and it is very unkind, and ungenerous, and almost inhuman, to sit down, like the friends of Job, and suppose that, because Job is greatly afflicted, he must therefore be greatly sinful. It is not so. All afflictions are not chastisements for sin; there are some afflictions that have quite another end and object. They are sent to refine, sent as a holy discipline, sent as sacred excavators, to make more room in the heart for Christ and his love. Indeed, you know that it is written, "As many as I tenderly love, I rebuke and chasten." "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

It was, therefore, in the last degree absurd to suppose that, if a man was born blind, it was a punishment for the sin of his parents, or a punishment sent beforehand for some sin which he might commit by-and-by. Our Saviour bids us look quite another way, and regard infirmities and physical evils as sent to be a space wherein God may display his power and his grace. It was so very specially in this particular instance; and I am going to push the fact further, and say that even sin itself, existing as it does everywhere, existing

especially in some, may afford what we call "elbow room" for the grace of God, and may, indeed, become a platform upon which the wonderful power, and patience, and sovereignty of divine grace may be displayed.

That will be the subject that we shall talk about to-night, how God takes opportunity from the sorrows and the sins of men to make manifest his own works to his own glory. As this man was born blind, in order that, through his blindness, the power of God might be seen in giving him sight, so I think there are many in whom the power of God may very readily be seen, and the works of God be very clearly made manifest.

I. So, first, let us enquire what works these are. WHAT WORKS OF GOD ARE SEEN IN THE SALVATION OF MEN?

There is a man over yonder who is all out of order; there is nothing right about him. He is a man upside down; his heart loves that which will ruin it, and does not love that which would bless it. His understanding is darkened; he puts bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. His will has become very domineering, and has usurped power which it never ought to possess. If you will study him well, you will not make much of him. He is all out of gear, like a piece of machinery in which the wheels do not operate correctly. To describe him briefly by one word, I should say that he is in a state of chaos, everything is in confusion and disorder, tossed up and down. "Well," says one, "that is my case; I am like that to-night."

Now, the first work of God that we read of in the Bible is the work of *creation:* "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." When the fulness of time was come for the fitting up of the world, which event we generally call creation, although it was really the arrangement of that which had been created, then the Lord came forth, and the Spirit of God, with outspread wings, brooded over chaos, and brought order out of confusion. Oh, that the Spirit of the Lord would to-night come and brood over that man's confused and confounded mind where everything is tossed about in wild disorder! He cannot tell why he was born, nor for what object he is living. He seems to have no purpose in life, he is tossed to and fro like a log in the ocean. His passions fly from vanity to vanity, and you cannot put him into order. His mother tried it; but he scorned to be tied to her apron-strings. Many friends have tried it since then; but he has now taken the bit into his mouth, and has run away, and refuses to obey the reins. O God, if thou wilt come to-night, and make him a new creature in Christ Jesus, thy creating work will be made manifest in him! If thou wilt mould, and model, and form, and fashion him until he shall be a vessel fit for thy use, then will the work of God begin to be manifested in him. Oh, that it might be so! There are some of us here who can bear witness that God is a great Creator, for he has made all things new within us, and transformed what before was chaos into a world of beauty and delight wherein he delights to dwell.

After the world was created, God's next work was that of *light-making.* The earth was created, but it was swathed in darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." No sun, no moon, no stars had yet appeared; no light had yet fallen upon the earth; perhaps by

reason of dense vapours which shut out the light. God did nothing but say, "Let there be light; and there was light."

Well now, to-night, there has come in here one who is not only without form and void, and dreadfully tossed about, but one who is himself dark, and in the dark. He wants the light, but he has none. He does not know the way of life; he does not see a ray of hope that he ever will find the way. He seems shut up in gloomy, thick, Egyptian night; and perhaps, worst of all, he does not know his true condition; but he calls darkness light, and prides himself that he can see, when really he can see nothing at all. Lord, speak the word, and say, "Let there be light," and the man will see the light, and see it at once! I am quite sure that, whether I can speak with power, or not, God can speak with power; and standing here, it is to my heart a sweet solace that he can, at this moment, find out the most darkened sinner in the building, sitting or standing anywhere about, and the light can penetrate into his soul in less time than it takes me to say the words; and to his own surprise the darkness shall be light about him, and the Egyptian night shall be turned into the midday of infinite love and mercy. Pray God that it may be so, brethren. Lift up a silent prayer to heaven, for this light-giving, this illumination is a special work of God; and there are many, who are now in the dark, in whom it is possible for this work of God to be manifested.

After these two works of God are done, after we have had creation and light-bringing, still there is death, and there is need of the divine work of *resurrection*. What is the use of a form beautifully fashioned if it be dead, and what is the use of light shining with all its brilliance upon a corpse? Yet in this house of prayer there are to-night some who are dead in trespasses and sins. They do not feel the weight of sin; yet to a living man it is an intolerable burden. They are not wounded by the two-edged sword of the Lord, though a living man is soon cut and gashed by it. They do not hear even the joyous notes of free grace and dying love. Though they ring out like a peal of silver bells, these dead sinners do not appreciate their sweet music. It is the work of God to make men live. There will come a day, and perhaps sooner than we think, when all the myriads of bodies that lie in our cemeteries and churchyards will start up from the grave to live again. That will be a manifestation of divine power; but it will not be a greater manifestation of divine power than when a dead heart, a dead conscience, a dead will is made to live with a divine life. Oh, that God would work that mighty miracle of mercy to-night! Pray that it may be so, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ. The dead will not pray for this resurrection; therefore let us pray for it for them. But if there be a man who does pray for it, one who cries, "Lord, make me live!" that is a proof that already there is a thrill of life shooting through him, or he would not have that living desire.

Brethren, I might thus continue working upon the line of the story of the creation, and the arranging of the world in due order; but I will not; you can do that for yourselves. I want next to speak to you about the divine work of *cleansing*. There is, to-night, in this place of worship, a man who is black with filth. He has done everything that he could do in order to rebel against God. Perhaps he is

like Mr. John Newton, who describes himself somewhat thus: he says, "I was in many respects like the apostle Paul. I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but there was one point in which I went beyond the apostle Paul, for he did it ignorantly, but I sinned against light and knowledge." Do I speak to any here who, in sinning, have transgressed very grossly because they have done what they knew was wrong, and have persevered in doing it against the checks of conscience, and against the warnings of a better longing, which they have never yet been able to kill? I am amazed, sometimes, when I have had to talk with those whose lives have certainly gone almost to the very extremity of iniquity, but who, nevertheless, all the time have had a certain inward check that would never let them go just that little piece further which would have put them beyond hope. There was always a something that they still revered, even when they pretended to disbelieve everything, and to blaspheme everything. There was some influence for good operating upon them still, as though God had a line and a hook in the jaws of leviathan; and though he ran out so far into the great deep of sin that you could not tell where he had gone, yet he had to come back again after all. God still doeth wonders of mercy and grace. Now, suppose, to-night, that that black sinner, with all his years of sin, should be forgiven outright, suppose that to-night the whole of those fifty or sixty years of sin should vanish once for all, suppose that God should forgive, better still, that God should forget, suppose that, with one tremendous fling of his omnipotent arm, he should take the whole mass of that sinner's sin, and cast it into the depths of the sea, what a wonder of grace that would be! That is what God will do for everyone who trusts in Jesus. If you will come, and cast yourself at his dear feet, and look up to Jesus crucified, bleeding in your stead, and believe those words of the prophet Isaiah, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," or the words of the apostle Peter, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree," if you trust Jesus, the great Sin-bearer, he will make you whiter than snow; and in your case the works of God shall be manifested, for none but the Almighty God can make scarlet sinners white, and he can do it in a moment. Lord, do it now!

Suppose that another thing should happen, that a man here, or a woman, who is desperately set on mischief, should to-night be turned in an entirely opposite direction, that would be manifestly a divine work of *changing the whole current of life.* I have never seen Niagara, and I do not suppose that I ever shall; but there are some here who have seen it. Down comes the mighty flood with a tremendous crash, for ever leaping down from on high. Would you not believe him to be God who should, in a moment, make that waterfall leap upward instead of downward, and as impetuously seek the heights as now it leaps into the depths? Well, the Lord can do that with some big Niagara-fall of a sinner here this very evening. You are determined to-night to go into evil company, and to commit a filthy sin; you are determined to-morrow to grasp the drunkard's cup, and not be satisfied until you have turned yourself into something below a beast; you are determined to pursue that evil business of yours, that getting money

by gambling, or somewhat worse. Yes, but if my Lord comes forth to-night, determined to save you, he will make you sing to another tune. "Oh, but I should never be a Methodist!" says one. I do not know what you will yet be. "Oh!" says another, "you would never make a convert of me." I did not say that I could; but the Lord can make you what you think you never will be. There are some here who, if they could have seen themselves, ten years ago, sitting here, and enjoying the Word, would have said, "No, no, Charlie, that is not you, I am sure, my boy," and, "No, Mary, that is not you, my girl; you will never be there; there is no fear of that." But you are here, you see; and what free grace has done for some of us, it can do for others. Lord, do it, according to that mighty power which thou didst work in Christ when thou didst raise him from the dead! Work in the same fashion in the ungodly to-night, and turn them from the error of their ways to run as impetuously after thee as now they run from thee!

I have only one more matter to mention under this head. I think that God's works are sometimes manifested in men, by *giving them great joy*. There is a person here to-night convinced of sin. Mr. Conscience has come up against him. You know Mr. Conscience. He keeps a cat-o'-nine-tails. When he is allowed to get to work, and he gets tight hold of a sinner who has long kept him under hatches, he says, "Now it is my turn;" and he lets you know it, believe me. Let a man once get conscience, with a cat-o'-nine-tails, laying it on, and he will never forget it. Every stroke seems to tear off a thongful of his quivering flesh. See how the nine ploughs make deep furrows every time they fall. "You speak," says one, "like a man who knows it." Know it? I did know it for years, while but a child; and neither night nor day could I escape from the falling of those terrible thongs. Oh, how conscience scourged me, and I could find no rest anywhere till, once upon a time, I heard the divine voice that said, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth;" and conscience put away his cat-o'-nine-tails, and my wounds were bathed in heavenly balsam, and they ceased to smart, and I was glad! Oh, how my heart cried, "Hallelujah!" as I saw Jesus on the cross! Then I understood that God had executed the full vengeance due to my sin upon his Well-beloved, who had kindly bared his shoulder to the lash, and undertaken to bear the punishment of my sin. Then did my heart leap with joy. You notice that I am always preaching that doctrine of substitution. I cannot help it, because it is the only truth that brought me comfort; I should never have got out of the dungeon of despair, if it had not been for that grand truth of substitution. I hope that no young lady is going to ask me to write in her album this week. That request is made to me I do not know how many days in the week, and I always write this verse in all the albums:—

> "E'er since by faith I saw the stream
> Thy flowing wounds supply,
> Redeeming love has been my theme,
> And shall be till I die."

If you once know the power of that blessed theme, then you will

see that it is a work of God to sweep away our ashes, and to give us the oil of joy, to take from us our robes of mourning, and to clothe us with garments of beauty, to put a new song into our mouths, and to establish our goings. May you all have this blessed work of God wrought in you, to the praise of the glory of his grace!

II. Now, my second head is this, HOW ARE THESE WORKS MADE SPECIALLY MANIFEST IN SOME MEN?

I will take this blind man, and just run over his life. First, *he was totally blind.* There was no sham about his blindness; he could not see a ray of light; he was totally blind; he knew nothing about light. Is there anybody here who is totally blind in a spiritual sense? You cannot see anything, my poor friend. You have not a good desire; you have not had even a good thought. Ah, you do not know what kind of people we have in this London; but we do meet with people who, for years, seem never to have had a good thought ever cross their minds; and if someone else were to speak to them about anything that is good, or even decent, he would be talking double Dutch to them! They do not understand it. We have multitudes of that kind in our slums; yes, and in the West-End they are just as bad. Now, when the Lord, in his infinite mercy, comes to these people who are totally blind, and he makes them see, there is room for his mighty power to work there, for everybody says, "What a wonderful thing that such a person as that should be converted!" I remember well a man with whom I have often prayed in very sweet fellowship. He was a queer fish when I first knew him, though he was a very good man afterwards. He was as eccentric a being as I ever met with; and I am sufficiently eccentric myself; but he was a dead worldling. His Sundays—well, he did not know any difference between Sunday and Monday, except that he could not be in the beer-shop for quite so long on Sundays. He said, "I had been out one Sunday morning to buy a pair of ducks, and I put one in each pocket of my coat; as I went along, and saw the people going into a place of worship, I thought that I would see what it was like, I had heard that it was a decent-looking place inside." He went, the Lord met with him, and that day those ducks did not get cooked, they had to wait till Monday; but he was himself caught, and captured for Christ that day. A total change took place in him, and he became a fervent Christian at once, whereas before he had been totally without any kind of religious thought, either of fear or of hope. Here was a case in which the works of God were specially made manifest. That man has gone to heaven now; well do I remember him, and how I praised God for his conversion.

But the man mentioned in our text was *born blind.* Now, there are many like that; indeed, all people are born blind. It is original sin, from which we all suffer. Sin is a taint of the blood. We are born blind. There are some who, in a very peculiar way, are bred and born in a family utterly destitute of religion; they are brought up to despise it, or else brought up in the midst of superstition, and taught to say a useless prayer to a crucifix of wood or stone. Can these people, who are so brought up, find Christ? But they do find Christ; or rather, Christ finds them; and they hear the gospel, and it commends itself to their minds straight away. I should suppose that

nobody was ever more superstitious than Martin Luther was. I have seen that staircase in Rome, up which Martin Luther went on his knees; it is said to be the staircase down which our Lord came from the palace of Pilate. I have seen the people go up and down on their knees. Just think of Luther doing it; and there came to him, as he was going up the stairs on his knees, those words, "The just shall live by faith," and he rose up at once, and he did not go on his knees any farther. Oh, that God would appear in that way to some of you!

Next, this blind man was *cured by special means*. That was another manifestation of God's works. The Saviour spat, stooped down, and with his finger worked that spittle into the dust until he had made clay; then taking it up, he began to put it over the man's eyes. I believe that God is greatly glorified by the salvation of people through the simple preaching of the gospel, the very simplest means that can be used. Often men say, when souls are saved in this place, as they are continually, "Well, I cannot see anything remarkable in the preacher." No, and if you were to look a great deal longer, you would see less than you see now, for there is not anything whatever in him, but there is a great deal in the gospel. O brethren, if some preachers would only preach the gospel, they would soon see how very superior it is to all their fine essays! But they prepare their sermons so well. Oh, yes! I know, but did you ever hear of the man who used to prepare the potatoes before he planted them in his garden? He always boiled them; but they never grew, for he had prepared all the life out of them. Now, many a boiled sermon is brought out to the people; but it never grows. It is elaborated and prepared so much that nothing will ever come out of it. The Lord loves to bless living words spoken in simple language out of an earnest heart. The man who speaks thus does not get the glory; but the glory goes to God, and thus there is room for the works of God to be manifested.

This blind man was also a specially fit sphere for God to manifest his works in, because *he was known as a public beggar*. They used to lead him up in the morning, I suppose, to the gate of the temple; and there he took his place, and sat down. He was a man with a ready tongue, I should guess, so that he often used to exchange chaff with those that went by, and they recollected what kind of a man he was. He was always very sarcastic, I suspect; and when they spoke to him, and gave him nothing, he knew how to give them something. That blind beggar was a well-known character in Jerusalem, as well known as the blind beggar of Bethnal Green; so the Saviour selected him, because he was so well known, and opened his eyes. So you have come here to-night, my friend, have you? You are well known; but I will not point you out; I do not like doing that kind of thing. There came in here, not long ago, a soldier who had been a professor of religion, but he had been a dreadful apostate, and had gone back, but he wanted to hear the gospel again. Just over yonder, where there are two pillars, he wisely chose a place where I could not see him. But it so happened, on that Sunday night, and he is the witness of it, and I well remember saying, "Well, Will, you have got to come back, you know; you have got to come back; and the sooner, the better;" and Will did come back, and he sent word to me to say that Will had

come back with a broken heart to find his Lord. I did not know that his name was Will, I am sure, and I did not know why he had hidden himself behind the pillars there; but God did, and he adapted the word to the person, and so he fetched Will back again. If there is any Will, or Tom, or Jack, or Mary, or if there are any others here who have wandered far from God, O sovereign grace, bring them back, whether they are soldiers or civilians, that they may seek and find the Saviour even now! This Will was well known, and his restoration to Christ will, I trust, manifest the works of God in him because he was so well known. Oh, that the Lord would hear that prayer of my friend this morning, and convert the Prince of Wales! We all said, "Amen" to that petition. We want the Lord to bring into his church some of those who are best known, whether they be princes or whether they be beggars, that the works of God may be manifest in them.

When this man was converted, instead of being a public beggar, *he became a public confessor.* I like that answer of his, "Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." There is many a man who can say, "Well, I do not know much about theology; but I know that I was a drunkard, and I know that I am not a drunkard now. I know that I used to beat my wife; and now, God bless her, she knows how I love her! Then I could have gone into all manner of sinful company; but now, thank God, his saints are my choice companions! Once I could have gloried in my own righteousness; but now I count it dross and dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him. There is a great change in me; nobody can deny that fact, and I praise God's name for it." The Lord send out a great company of men who are not ashamed of Jesus Christ! We want many men and women who will come straight out from the world, and say, "Christ for me, for he has so touched my heart, that I am for him; and if no one else will confess him, I must do so, for he is my best Friend, my Lord, my Saviour, my all." In such cases, the works of God are made manifest.

III. Now, I have done when I have just said three or four things by way of hints upon this last point, How may God's works be manifest in us?

Some of you are very poor; others are very lame or very sickly; you are consumptive, asthmatical, full of aches, and pains, and complaints. Now, then, perhaps all this suffering is permitted that the work of God may be manifest *in your afflictions*, by your holy patience, your submission to the divine will, your persevering holiness amid all your poverty and trials. All this is sent that God's grace may be seen in you. Will you look at your afflictions in that light, and believe that they are not sent as a punishment, but as a platform upon which God may stand, and display his free grace in you? Bear well all the Lord's will, for your trials are sent for this purpose, that God's works may be manifest in you.

The same is true of *your infirmities.* We are none of us perfect; but we may also have physical infirmities. Now believe, if you are sent to preach the gospel, or to teach children, or in any way to advance the kingdom of God, that you would not be any better fitted for your

work if you had all the eloquence of a Cicero, and all the learning of a Newton. You, as you are, can serve the Lord, and can fill a certain place better, with all your drawbacks, than you could without those drawbacks. A sensible Christian man will make use of his infirmities for God's glory. There is a strange story that they tell of St. Bernard, a tradition which is believed by some people, but which I look at as an allegory rather than as a matter of fact. He was going over the Alps towards Rome upon some business. The devil knew that the saint was about to do something that would greatly injure his kingdom, so he came and broke one of the wheels of the saint's carriage; whereat Bernard called out to him, and said, "You think to stop me in this way, do you, Satan? Now you shall suffer for it yourself;" so he took him, and twisted him round, and made a wheel of him, and fastened him to the carriage, and then went driving on, Now, the meaning of that allegory is that, when infirmities threaten to injure your usefulness, you are to use those infirmities in God's service. Turn the devil himself into a wheel, and go ahead all the better because of the hindrance that he tried to cause. Why, it might be an advantage sometimes to be compelled by stammering to lay emphasis on a word; and if ever I did feel myself now and then stuck in a hole by that process, I would take care to be stuck somewhere near the cross. Many a man has had the power to attract people by the very singularity which looked as if it must impair his usefulness. All our infirmities, whatever they are, are just opportunities for God to display his gracious work in us.

So it will be with all *the oppositions that we meet with.* If we do serve the Lord, we shall be sure to meet with difficulties and oppositions; but they are only more opportunities for the works of God to be seen in us.

By-and-by, we shall come to die, and *in our deaths* God's work may be manifest. I wonder by what death we shall glorify God. Was not that a beautiful expression of John's, when the Saviour spoke of Peter? He told Peter how he would die; but John does not put it so. He says, "By what death he should glorify God." Perhaps it will be by a long, pining sickness; some will be gradually dissolved by consumption. Well, you will glorify God by it. Those pale cheeks, and that thin hand, through which the light will shine, will preach many a sermon on that sick bed. Or perhaps you will glorify God in some other fashion. You may have to die with bitter pangs of pain; but then, if the Lord cheers you, and makes you patient, you will glorify God by that kind of death. You will look death calmly in the face, and not fret, and not be afraid. You will have to die somehow, unless the Lord himself shall come; and, blessed be his name, he will take you home in a way that will somehow or other bring glory to his name, however it may be. So let us begin to rejoice in it even now.

May God bless these words of mine, and may many here be eternal monuments of the boundless, sovereign grace of God; and unto him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—152, 369, 394.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN IX. 1—38.

Verse 1. *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*

The man could not see Jesus, but sight came to the man from Jesus. If there are any here who cannot look to Christ as yet, our prayer is that he may look on them as he looked on this blind man.

2. *And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*

Beloved, if you had Christ with you, you could occupy your time better than in asking such questions as this; and I think that, when we go to Holy Scripture, we can do better than pry into things of small practical importance, or even into great mysteries. However, in this case, since the disciples were liable to fall into grave error, our Lord gave them instruction upon the matter that perplexed them.

3. *Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*

In other words, this man is not blind as the result of sin in himself, or in his parents. He is blind in order that God may have a platform for the display of his gracious power in healing him.

4, 5. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*

Our Saviour felt that he was commissioned as a servant of his Father, sent here to do a certain work, and he must be doing it. It is well for God's servants to feel a holy compulsion; it does not take away from them the freedom of their action, and their delight in the service of God; but still it exercises a powerful influence over a man when he feels, "Woe is me, if I preach not the gospel;" or when, like the Lord Jesus, he says, "I must work the works of him that sent me." Did the Well-beloved, the Prince of Heaven, come under compulsion? Did he put himself under that "must" which is for the king? Then you and I may well put ourselves under holy bondage for the Lord. There, do not hinder me; do not tell me that I am too feeble in health; "I must work the works of him that sent me."

6, 7. *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.*

Our Lord often works miracles without means, and sometimes with means which appear to be quite inappropriate. It would seem to be more easy to blind a man with clay than to open his eyes with it; and there are some who assert that the gospel plainly spoken would lead men into sin, but it does not. It is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." If you go to work in the name of God, if you put the clay on the sinner's eyes, and bid him go and wash, you will see what will happen.

8—11. *The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.*

Does he not tell his story well? If he had not been a blind man whose eyes had just been opened, he would have exaggerated somewhere or other. I never heard a man tell a tale with absolute correctness; it is not the way of

people, they are sure to put in some little item by way of garnishing, for there is a bump of romance in most men's heads ; but this shrewd, strictly honest man tells the story briefly, but leaves out no important particular.

12—15. *Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.*

That was short and sweet ; and when you have to deal with Pharisees, do not give them much ; they are not worth it, and they are sure to misuse it. When he spoke to the common people, he enlarged, and gave them details ; but now that he comes to talk to these pragmatical professors, he cuts it down to as few words as possible.

16. *Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.*

Yes, and there is a division among the enemies of Christ always ; they cannot agree among themselves. If they could always lay their heads together, and agree, they might have greater power ; but the Edomites draw their swords against the children of Ammon, and they are sure to slay one another in the long run. There were also some among these Pharisees who had a conscience, men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa ; and they asked, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?"

17. *They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.*

He must be a prophet. He could not have worked such a miracle as that if he had been a common man : "He said, He is a prophet."

18. *But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.*

You see, John gives to the Pharisees the name which they arrogated to themselves : "we are Jews." But they were not true Jews. They called themselves Jews, and so John speaks of them as "the Jews." It often happens that a certain clique or party will run away with a name which does not belong to them any more than it does to a great many who differ from them very widely. These Pharisees pretended that they would not believe the miracle. It was manifest before their eyes ; but yet they would not believe it until they called his parents.

19—21. *And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.*

This was very shrewd on their part ; but I think that I must add that it was very cowardly to throw all the testimony on their son. There are some parents who, if their children do right, if they follow Christ, seem to leave them to take care of themselves.

22. *These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.*

Excommunicated ; and they could not bear to be cut off from the respectable society which they had hitherto enjoyed.

23, 24. *Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.*

Does it not sound pretty from their Pharisaic lips? Arch hypocrites

pretending to teach a man who knew much better than themselves! "We know that this man is a sinner. You did not know it, but we know it; and as we know it, and we are doctors, you must believe it."

25. *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.*

He could not be beaten out of that. You cannot argue a man out of an experience of this kind; and if the Lord Jesus Christ has ever opened your eyes, dear friend, nobody can make you doubt that blessed fact.

26, 27. *Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes? He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?*

He threw a little sarcasm into that last question. The man was a very remarkable person, a simple-hearted, honest man, but withal quite able to hold his own in any company.

28. *Then they reviled him,*

It is a bad case, so abuse the plaintiff. There is nothing to be said for our side, so let us abuse the man who has had his eyes opened.

28—30. *And said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is. The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*

Does not that manifestation of miraculous power show where he must have come from? Could he have come from anywhere but from God?

31—33. *Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

Well argued! The case is proven indeed.

34. *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?*

Cannot you hear them say it? "A blind beggar, who has just begun to see, 'Dost *thou* teach us?'—D.D.'s, men who are learned in the law, 'Dost thou teach *us*?'" Well, brethren, if a man has only one eye, he may teach those who have not any, for the old proverb says, "In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye is king." Yet there is another proverb on this subject, and that is, "In the realm of the blind, the man with one eye gets hanged." That was likely to be the case here; the blind Pharisees could not bear the man who could see. He knew too much for them.

34—36. *And they cast him out. Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*

He wanted instruction. Christ may have done much for a man, but he may not as yet fully know the Lord. There may be some here to-night upon whom Christ has wrought a great deal, and yet you do not know him as you will know him: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

37, 38. *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

That is the way with a genuine believer, he worships Christ. Why? Because he believes him to be God. It would be idolatry to worship Christ if he were only man, and Christ would have been an impostor if he had allowed this man to worship him if he had not been God. But he was God; and we, believing him to be God, worship Christ as very God of very God, to whom be praise for ever and ever! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

HOWLING CHANGED TO SINGING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, MAY 28TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, April 28th, 1889.

"How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me? . . . . I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."—Psalm xiii. 1, 2, and 6.

THIS is a very short Psalm, there are only six verses in it; but what a change there is between the beginning and the end of it! The first two verses are dolorous to the deepest degree; but the last verse is joyful to the highest degree. David begins many of his Psalms sighing, and ends them singing, so that I do not wonder that Peter Moulin says, "One would think that those Psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary humour." If I were asked, "Are there two men here, or is there only one?" My answer would be, that there is only one, but that one is two, for every man is two men, especially every spiritual man. He will find within himself an old man and a new man, an old nature and a new nature; and even the new nature itself is subject to strange changes, so that, like April weather, we have sunshine and showers blended. Sometimes it seems as if all the showers were poured on the top of the sunshine, and the sunshine itself were quenched, and could scarcely gladden us.

David was a wonderful man for changes of experience. God permitted him to go through many experiences, not so much for himself, as for the good of succeeding generations. Whenever you look into David's Psalms, you may somewhere or other see yourselves. You never get into a corner but you find David in that corner. I think that I was never so low that I could not find that David was lower; and I never climbed so high that I could not find that David was up above me, ready to sing his song upon his stringed instrument, even as I could sing mine. These are two instantaneous photographs; the first one gives us the man complaining, the second one gives us the man rejoicing. I wonder whether we shall get two such photographs

to-night, some sitting here complaining, who, before the service is over, will go their way rejoicing. God grant that it may be so!

Possibly somebody here says, "I do not understand what you mean by each man being two men." Well, let me say a little more on that point. Every man is a mystery. He is a mystery to other people; but, if he ever thinks, he is a great mystery to himself; and, if he never does think, why then I think that he is a mystery indeed, that he should have such a wondrous faculty as the power of thought, and yet should let it lie idle! He who does not study himself, may think that he understands himself, but it is the judgment of folly. He who has been accustomed to make a friend of himself, and has had himself for his companion, and talked to himself, and cross-examined himself, is the man who will say, "I am puzzled; I cannot make myself out; I am often at my wits' end. I am such a strange mixture, and so dreadfully changeable."

You must know yourself, dear friend, in some measure, or else I am afraid that you will never know the Lord Jesus Christ; and if you do not know him, then you do not know what life eternal means, for to know him is life eternal. But why is it needful for us to know ourselves, that we may know Christ? You must have some knowledge of the disease that you may know what the Physician can do; and there is also this truth to be remembered, the Lord Jesus Christ is the model Man, and only by knowing something about men do we know much about him. Is it not strange that the Psalms are often so written that you do not know whether David is writing about himself or about the Lord Jesus? One verse can only be applied to Christ, and you are certain that David is writing of the Messiah; but the next verse you can hardly apply to Christ, for there are some terms in it which would be derogatory to the Lord Jesus Christ, so it must refer to David. The fact is, that there is a wonderful union between David and David's Lord, there is a marvellous union between the saint and his Saviour, between the believer and him in whom he believes; and you cannot tell always where one begins and the other ends. So, if you have no knowledge of man, it is to be feared that you have no knowledge of that Son of man, the Man of men, the Saviour of men, the first-born amongst many brethren, to whose likeness we are yet to be fully conformed. I invite anybody here, who has not yet known the Saviour, to pray to God to make him know himself. It may be that the discovery of what you are will necessitate your discovering what Christ is. A true estimate of your own poverty may compel you to resort to him for wealth. A true sight of your own disease may force you to apply to him for his all-healing medicine. Certainly it is to be urged upon you by the highest of motives that you do not, with all your understanding, forget to understand yourself; and that, while you have many books on your shelf, you do not read them so as to forget this book which lies within, this wonderful book which concerns you more than all the writings of men, the book of your own nature, your own wants, your own desires, your own changes. God make you familiar with them, and then make you also familiar with the book of grace which is written in the life of the Son of man!

Now, with that as a preface, I invite you to the study of our text.

First, you will see, in the first two verses, *a man complaining*. Go three verses farther on, and you will get to *a man singing*, about whom we will talk in the second place. And then we shall close our discourse to-night by asking, What are *the connecting links between the man complaining and the man singing?* How did this complaining man get up to concert pitch, and begin to sing before he had gone more than a little way further on the road?

I. First, then, here is A MAN COMPLAINING.

Pardon me if I say that here is a man *howling*. Let me read the first two verses again: "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" Said I not truly, when I called it howling? There is so much of complaining here, so much of questioning—"How long? How long? How long? How long?" four times over, that we may call it, as David did once call his prayer, "the voice of my roaring." It is a kind of howling, roaring, moaning complaint before God, in the bitterness of his soul. Let us take these four "How longs?" and speak of them.

Here is, first, *the poor man's grief, as it seems to him:* "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? for ever?" Think for a minute. Can God forget? Can Omnipotence forget? Can unchanging love forget? Can infinite faithfulness forget? Yet so it seems to David. So it has often seemed to men in the deepest of trouble. "How long wilt thou forget me?" You have been praying for mercy, and you cannot find it, and you think that God forgets. You have been, perhaps, a seeker after peace for years, and yet you have not found it, and you think that God forgets. Or, perhaps, years ago, you were one of the happiest of the happy, and you bathed in the light of God's countenance; and now you are the unhappiest of the unhappy, you are at a distance from your God, you have been trying to get back, and cannot get back, and you think that God forgets you. Or else wave upon wave of trouble has rolled over you; you have hardly had time to breathe between the surges of your grief. You are ready to perish with despondency, and you think that God forgets you. That is how it looks to you; but it is not so, and cannot be so. God cannot forget anything, it is impossible. "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" Mark that expression, the child that still draws its nourishment from her bosom. That is just what you are doing still; for, albeit you think that God forgets you, you are still living on what he daily gives you, and you would die if he did not give you of his grace and strength. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Lay hold of that great truth, and dismiss that which can be only an appearance and an error. God hath not forgotten to be gracious, nor has he even forgotten you.

The next "How long?" the next piece of David's howling, represents *his trouble as it really is*. "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" That is as it really is with some of you; God has hidden his face from you; not his heart, nor his mind. He has not forgotten you, but he has taken away from you the comfort of his smile. Are you

crying, to-night, "Lord, how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" I am glad you cry about it; the ungodly do not cry for God's face to be revealed to them, they wish that God would always hide his face from them. They do not want either his face or his favour. But if you are longing to see his face, it is because that face is full of love to you. I do not wonder that you are unhappy, if you have lost the light of God's countenance, for he who has ever had it cannot lose it, nay, not for a moment, without feeling his heart ready to break. "There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us." Only give us to know that thou lovest us, and we will not envy the man who owns the greatest estate, or enjoys the highest degree of human applause. This is enough for us, to have God with us. Oh, dear child of God, if thou hast lost the light of thy Father's countenance, and thou sighest after it, thou shalt have it again, thou shalt have it very soon! By the degree of thy longing, thou mayest measure the length of his absence. If thou longest but little, he will be absent long; but if thou longest much, he will soon come to thee. Thou wilt soon find that the hidings of his face are over, and the light of his countenance is again thy joy.

This is what the trouble really is; and a great trouble it is while it lasts, though it works for your good. What plants would grow if it were always day? Does not night make them grow as well as day? Brethren, if we always had fine weather, should we ever have a harvest at all? The Arabs have a proverb, "All sun makes the desert." If there is no rain, how can there be verdure? There is a ripeness given to the fruits by the moon as well as by the sun. Grieve when God hides his face from thee, but do not despair as well as grieve; and believe that even in this he loves thee still. It is a face of love that thou dost not see. Thou believest that, thyself, or else thou wouldst not wish to see it. If it were a face of wrath, thou wouldst not be longing to see it again. It is a face of love that is hidden from thee. Wherefore, be of good courage, thou shalt see it by-and-by.

Notice next, that we have *the man's sorrow as it is within himself.* "How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily?" He talks to himself. That is the counsel he takes with himself, and he does not get any very great help out of that. It is a mark of wisdom to talk with yourselves sometimes, but not if you make yourself your own oracle. A man may talk to himself until he talks himself into despair; though there is a way of talking with yourself that will talk you up into the light, such as David used when he said, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God." That is the way to talk to yourself. But yet, as a rule, there is not much good comes of talking to yourself unless there is a third One present, that blessed One, who can construe what self may say in mystery, and set right what self might twist into error. Oh, yes, I know some who pour out their hearts within them! Do you remember what David says in the forty-second Psalm? "I pour out my soul in me." Now, if it were possible to pour the contents of a jug of water out into itself, the water would be there all the same, would it not? That is a grand passage where David says, "Ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a

refuge for us." Take your pitcher, and turn it bottom upwards, and let the contents all run out. That is a true easement. To pour out from itself into itself, is a poor change. To pour it out before God, is to find instant relief. Beloved, it may be that you cannot get any relief, and that daily, from morning until evening, you are still in a fret and a trouble. Well, that is the case with David here; and my text is a photograph of you.

And, once more, the fourth "How long?" shows *the man's sorrow as it is without him.* "How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" It adds very much to a man's grief when somebody from the outside says, "Oh, you are always miserable! It makes anybody wretched to be near you." It was thus when Peninnah exulted over Hannah's barrenness, and "provoked her sore, to make her fret." It does happen to many Christians to have this sort of thing done by somebody, especially a very "candid friend." A candid friend is only an enemy candied over with a little sugar, as a general rule, and one who takes the opportunity to say nastier things than a downright enemy would say. You may have some such person in your family. Above all, there is our great adversary, from whom may God deliver us, who also delights to triumph and exult over us whenever he can! And so our trouble outside is, that Satan and his allies exult over us, and we have not yet learned to say, as we ought to say, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise." That last touch may, perhaps, make the photograph depict somebody here who said, "I do not think that I shall see my portrait to-night. I have been roaming about, and got into great trouble, and I am one by myself." Well, but here is David, who is with you, and David's Lord is with you, too.

That is the first photograph, a man complaining.

II. I am glad to pass from the first view, and bring on the second one. The second picture of the same person is found in the sixth verse, where we see A MAN SINGING: "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

It is the same man that we saw before, but he has done with his howling, and has taken to singing, for, first, *his heart is rejoicing.* Read the fifth verse. He says, "My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." It is not merely the appearance of joy: it is real joy; his heart is rejoicing. Have you never seen a friend, who has been suddenly lifted up by the Spirit of God out of great mourning, and of whom you have said, "Well, I should not have known that it was the same person"? Grief throws a peculiar cast over the human countenance. Well do I remember, as a child, a lady who used to come to my grandfather's house, whose face was terrible to look upon, and when I asked who that sad lady was, they said, "Hush, child," and they made me hold my tongue until she was gone, and then they told me that she was one who thought that she had committed the unpardonable sin. I do not know what it was that struck me; but there was something about her face which has never gone from my memory, though it must be pretty well fifty years ago that I saw her. But when a person is full of joy, especially spiritual joy, have you ever noticed what a kind of transfiguration the face undergoes? You

have been yourself to have your photograph taken, and the man places an iron clamp at the back of your neck, and you go away directly, I mean that *you* do. Your body stands there, but yourself goes travelling down the rod of iron, and you are not there at all, and the likeness is not yourself; it is your chrysalis, the case in which you used to be, but *you* are gone. Well, now, when you have joy in your heart, really in your heart so that everybody can see it on your countenance, your eyes begin to sparkle, and your whole face is lit up, so that people say, "Well, really, he is only an ordinary-looking person as a general rule, but when he is in that state of mind, there is a wonderful kind of beauty about him." Now, the Lord can work that change for some of you, so that when you go home, mother will say, "Why, Maria, you are quite different from what you were when you went to the Tabernacle! John, how changed you are! You went so dull and heavy, and now you seem to be quite another person." Yes, the secret is, that it is with him as it was with David, his heart is rejoicing.

The next thing is that *his tongue is praising:* "I will sing unto the Lord." That which is down in the well will come up in the bucket. That which is in the heart is sure to come up to the mouth before long; so the happy believer begins to sing, and very likely he breaks out with the children's hymn,—

> "I feel like singing all the time,
> My tears are wiped away;
> For Jesus is a Friend of mine,
> I'll serve him every day."

You may try, perhaps, to repress your emotion; but if the Lord has really brought you up out of the horrible pit, such as I have been describing, your emotion will not be altogether repressed. You will feel as if, should you hold your peace, the very stones would begin to cry out. A rejoicing heart soon makes a praising tongue.

Notice, next, that *the man's judgment is content.* That cool, calculating faculty now begins to read God's dealings, and it comes to a very different conclusion from that which it arrived at before. Some of you used to learn, as children, a book called "Why, and Because"; and it is a good thing to have a "why and because" for your own feelings. Now, says David, "I will sing unto the Lord, because, after weighing and judging the matter thoroughly, I can testify that he hath dealt bountifully with me. I thought that he had forgotten me, but he hath dealt bountifully with me. I thought that he had hidden his face from me, but he hath dealt bountifully with me. I said in my heart that he treats me very harshly, but I call all such language back. Lord, I eat my own words with bitter herbs, and I regret that I should ever have used them! Thou hast dealt bountifully with me." "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." This poor man, who thought that he was forgotten, now looks at the food which God has put upon his table, and he finds that he has Benjamin's portion, much more than was given to the rest of his brethren; and his verdict is totally changed now, as to the dealings of the Lord with him. He says, "Thou preparest a

table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

And now that his judgment has been set right, now that heart, tongue, judgment, all are right, *his resolve is right*, for he says, "I will sing unto the Lord." "Not only am I singing now, but I will make up my mind to this, I have been sighing long enough, I will sing now. I have been groaning and complaining, now I will sing. I will sing unto the Lord." I like this resolve, for it relates not only to present joy, but it is a resolution to project that joy throughout the whole of his life. "I will sing unto the Lord." I do trust that some of you will go out of the Tabernacle to-night, saying, "Well, I will sing; yes, I will. God helping me, I will. I will sing unto the Lord. I will sing at my work. I will sing on my bed. I will sing when I wake in the morning. I will sing when I go to bed at night. The Lord hath put a new song into my mouth, and I cannot keep it there; I must sing it out. I must sing his praises." I am sure we will not try to stop you. We will encourage you to sing unto the Lord as much as possible.

There is not half enough singing in the world. The music of the early mornings in the country, at this time of the year, always seems to chide me. The birds are up, and they wake us up; and when they are up, the first thing they do is to sing; and there is a kind of contention among them, each one tries to sing the most sweetly, and the most loudly, and one calls to another, and the other answers to him. They sing as they fly, and they sing as they build their nests; and they make such a wonderful chorus of song, that it often astonishes us that such little creatures can make such cataracts, such Niagaras, of music as they pour forth from their tiny throats. Oh, that God's people would sing more! I remember a servant who used to sing while she was at the wash-tub. Her mistress said to her, "Why, Jane, how is it that you are always singing?" She said, "It keeps bad thoughts away." I remember an old Methodist brother, who was pretty nearly eighty, and I never came across him, as he went along the street at a rather slow pace, without hearing him toot-tootling little bits of tunes as he walked. If you went by his door, and heard a noise in his house, it was the old man singing. He never seemed to make any other noise but that of praising and blessing God. Oh, that we might do so continually!

"Sing a hymn to Jesus,
When the heart is faint;
Tell it all to Jesus,
Comfort or complaint;"

and, when you have done that, sing another; and when you have finished that, sing another. Whether it be a hymn of comfort or complaint, still sing to the praise of his name, and make this your resolution as you go out to-night, "I will sing unto the Lord, my God, as long as I live."

There are the two photographs. Put them into your album, and take care of them.

III. But how came this change to take place? What are THE CONNECTING LINKS BETWEEN THE MAN COMPLAINING AND THE MAN SINGING? How did No. 1 get to be No. 2? How did this howler become a singer? What process did he pass through?

If you read this thirteenth Psalm over again when you get home, you will notice that the first thing he did was, *he pleaded with God.* He stated his case to the Lord, he mentioned the separate particulars of it, and then he pleaded, "Consider and hear me, O Jehovah, my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." For you, mourners, the first step towards comfort is to go and take the matter to your God. You have Rab-shakeh's letter in your pocket now; it is a dreadful letter, enough to make you sad. While I have been preaching, you have been sighing to yourself, "Ah, me! When I get home, I shall be thinking about that letter; I shall lie awake thinking of it." Some of you, who are rather of a nervous temperament, will let some little thing keep boring into you like a gimlet. You cannot get away from it. Now, I invite you to take that letter out of your pocket when you get home, and spread it before the Lord. Many and many a time I have had great troubles: who can be the pastor of such a church without them? I have done my very best with the matter that has perplexed me, and I have only made it worse; and at last I have laid it before the Lord, and prayed over it; and in such cases I have always said to myself, "I will never have anything to do with that matter again; I have done with it." I advise you to do the same. Cast thy burden upon the Lord. Put it upon that shelf. But then if you take it down again, what good have you done? No, leave it there; leave it there; and have done with it. The Lord will bring you out of the difficulty when you clear yourself of it. But do not go on hugging your trouble; take it to the Lord in prayer. If you have a solicitor, and there is a suit at law, and the person against whom the suit is laid comes to you, and says, "I want to hear what you are going to do," do not say anything to him, except, "I have left that with my solicitor. You must be so good as to see him; I refer you to him." If there are two of you to manage the business, one will be a fool; and I think I know which that one will be. Either do not have a solicitor, and be your own lawyer; or else, if you have somebody to attend to the suit for you, let him do it. Why keep dogs and bark yourself? So let it be in all things. If you lay the matter before God, then do not begin to take it on your own back as well. That will be an absurdity. Although I made you smile just now, by quoting an old proverb, I do seriously urge upon you, my friends, the impropriety of attempting to undertake a case which you have laid before God in prayer. Leave it there. If you have done so, let your Advocate see you through with the business. Come, beloved, you shall soon begin to change your mode of talking, if you will go and tell your trouble to God straight away. "Well, I shall see my brother to-morrow." Do not see your brother; go and see your Father. "Oh, but I want to call in a friend!" That is what I want you to do, but not the friend you are thinking of; call in the Friend of friends. Tell him everything

about your trouble and your difficulty; and when you have done that, have done with it, and leave it with him. You will then soon begin to sing.

The next thing is that David, having prayed, and brought his cause before God, *trusted in the Lord.* This is the chief point. Read the fifth verse, and you will see that the whole story is made plain: "I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation." I seem as if I could leave all you troubled saints now, just to say to any sinner here, who is in deep soul-trouble, what you have said to yourself, "That first photograph was very like me. I cannot say that I am at all like the second one." No, but you will be like that second one, if you will from your heart say this, "I have trusted in thy mercy." This is the remedy for the disease of sin, and for the disease of the heart—trust Jesus. There he hangs on yonder cross. Trust him. "I cannot realize that he is mine," you say. Did I tell you to realize that? Trust him. "Oh, but I do not feel as if I had a good heart to bring to him." Did I tell you to bring him anything? Trust him. Trust him. Trust him. Oh, child of God, this is the lesson you want to learn—*trust!* Oh, old sinner, this is the essential lesson for you if you would enter into light and peace—*trust!* "I have so many sins." Trust! "But I have such tendencies to sin." Trust him to overcome those tendencies. "But I have tried." No, I did not say try; but trust. "But I, I, I will try." No, do not try; I did not say try. "Sir, I was going to say I will try to trust." I did not say try to trust. Trying to trust is the very reverse of trusting. If Christ be a liar, do not trust him. If he be true, trust him. If he cannot save you, do not trust him; but as he is the Almighty Saviour, trust him. Oh, that I could shout that word loud as a thousand thunders speaking at once, TRUST! O soul, the way of the law is obey; a hard word, with which you cannot comply, for you are too weak; but the gospel way is trust, *trust*, TRUST. When thou hast learned that way, thou shalt afterwards learn how to obey, and thou shalt obey through trusting: but the first thing is, trust. Is thy leg broken, so that thou canst not walk? Lean on him who can carry thee. Hast thou a great weight? Lean hard, then. Is it greater than ever it was? Lean harder, then. Trust, implicitly trust. As the blind man puts his hand into the hand of him who can see, that he may lead him, so trust thou in Jesus. Put thy hand into the hand of him who was crucified, and trust him to-night.

There, you may put away that first photograph. You may sit down now, if you have trusted, and we will take your likeness again; and I am sure your likeness will agree with the sixth verse, and you will say, "I will sing unto the Lord; I will go home singing. I have trusted. I have found salvation."

Lord, lead these people to trust thee! Why can they not trust thee? What hast thou ever done that they should doubt thee? Lord Jesus, if I had a million souls, I would trust them all with thee, fully persuaded that thou couldst wash them all whiter than snow. Trust, then, beloved friends; trust Jesus. God help you to trust, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS XII., XIII., AND XIV.

Psalm xii. Verse 1. *Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

One might have thought that David still lived among us, his cry is so timely, so exactly true to the position of affairs to-day. What a prayer he offers! Driven away from confidence in men, he cries, "Help, Lord! Thou mighty One, put forth thy power! Thou faithful One, display thy truth! 'Help, Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.'"

2. *They speak vanity every one with his neighbour: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.*

They speak vanity; there is nothing in it. It is all froth, no reality; vain speech about vain subjects, having no real spiritual power to help the man that heareth: "They speak vanity." "With a double heart do they speak:" saying one thing, and meaning another; trifling with words; orthodox to the ear, heterodox to the heart. Oh, how much there is of this falseness in these days! Still are there many who "speak with flattering lips and with a double heart." It is some comfort to us to know that no new thing has happened unto us; we are merely going through an old part of the road which David traversed long ago.

3, 4. *The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things: who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?*

There is the point in dispute. Man will be lord of himself, and God will be Lord of all and everything; and there can be no compromise between these two. Not even a man's lips are really his own. Who gave the gift of speech? Who created the mouth? Who is Lord over us? Why, the answer is simple enough! He that made us, he that redeemed us, he should be Lord over us. Let us willingly put ourselves in subjection to him.

5. *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD;*

God takes notice of the oppression of poor men, and especially of poor saints, when they are tried by the wickedness of the age: "Now will I arise, saith the Lord."

5, 6. *I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.*

There is no mistake about the words of this blessed Book. The very words themselves are as accurate, as infallible, as silver is pure when it has been seven times refined by the most skilful artist. There is no improving upon God's words. We dare not leave one of them out. We would not presume to put one of our own side by side with them: "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

7, 8. *Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.*

When sin gets into the high places of the earth, then it becomes very abundant. Every evil man takes liberty to creep out into public life when some great leader in vice occupies the throne. God save the people when such is the case!

Psalm xiii. Verses 1, 2. *How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?*

When you and I have to spread our complaints before God, we are not the first who have done so. When we complain of God's forsaking us, we are not alone. There was a greater than David who, even in the article of death, cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

3. *Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;*

When it is dark, very dark, we get drowsy. Sorrow induces sleep. Remember how the Saviour found the disciples sleeping for sorrow. Therefore David asks for light. Light will help him to keep awake, and he fears to sleep, so he prays, "Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death."

4, 5. *Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved. But—*

What a precious "but" this is! You can hear the chain rattle as the anchor goes down to hold the vessel.

5, 6. *I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.*

What a climb there is, in this Psalm, from the abyss of sorrow up to the summit of joy! "I will sing unto the Lord because he hath dealt bountifully with me." I hope many of us know what this blessed change means. If any of you are in great sorrow to-night, may my Lord and Master lighten your eyes!

Psalm xiv. Verse 1. *The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*

He was a fool to think it. He was not fool enough, however, to say it except in his heart. Fools have grown more brazen-faced of late; for now, they not only say it in their heart, but they say with their tongues, "There is no God." Oh, no; I have made a mistake! They do not call them "fools" now; they call them "philosophers." That, however, is often exactly the same thing.

1. *They are corrupt,*

It is always so. When they will have no God, they will have no goodness: "They are corrupt." That is the secret of infidelity. The psalmist has put his finger on it: "They are corrupt."

1, 2. *They have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.*

David represents God looking from the battlements of heaven upon our fallen humanity; and at the time when he looked, he could see none that understood him, or sought him. By nature we are all in this condition. Until the grace of God seeks us, we never seek God. Even God looked in vain. He was no stern critic; he was no hypercritic: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God."

3. *They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

"That was in old Testament times," says one. If you turn to the Epistle to the Romans, you will find that Paul quotes it as being true in his day. It is always true, and it always will be true, apart from the grace of God: "There is none that doeth good; no, not one."

4. *Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?*

Are they all so foolish?

4. *Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the* LORD.

They think nothing of God's people. They could swallow them at a mouthful, they so despise them. Notice, that, whenever a man despises God, he soon despises God's people; it is only natural that he should do so. Meanwhile, he himself will not call upon the Lord.

5. *There were they in great fear:*

What, these very people who would not call upon God! Were they in great fear? Yes, God can bring great fear upon the men who seem most bold. It is noticed that the boldest blasphemers, when they become ill, are generally the most timid persons. These are the people who begin to cry, and give up what they boasted of, when they get into deep waters: "There were they in great fear."

5. *For God is in the generation of the righteous.*

He is with his people, he always will be with his people, and when he makes bare his arm, fear takes possession of his enemies.

6. *Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the* LORD *is his refuge.*

They mocked at the idea of a man's trusting in God for his daily bread, or trusting in God for his eternal salvation; but, mock as men may, there is no other refuge for a soul but God. When the floods are out, there is no safety but in the ark with God. Oh, that men would trust in him!

7. *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! when the* LORD *bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.*

May that time soon come! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—63 (Song III), 30, 130.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OUR LORD'S LAST CRY FROM THE CROSS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 4TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 9th, 1889.

"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."—Luke xxiii. 46.

THESE were the dying words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." It may be instructive if I remind you that the words of Christ upon the cross were seven. Calling each of his cries, or utterances, by the title of a word, we speak of the seven last words of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me rehearse them in your hearing. The first, when they nailed him to the cross, was, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke has preserved that word. Later, when one of the two thieves said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," Jesus said to him, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." This also Luke has carefully preserved. Farther on, our Lord, in his great agony, saw his mother, with breaking heart, standing by the cross, and looking up to him with unutterable love and grief, and he said to her, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to the beloved disciple, "Behold thy mother!" and thus he provided a home for her when he himself should be gone away. This utterance has only been preserved by John.

The fourth and central word of the seven was, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is, being interpreted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This was the culmination of his grief, the central point of all his agony. That most awful word that ever fell from the lips of man, expressing the quintessence of exceeding agony, is well put fourth, as though it had need of three words before it, and three words after it, as its body-guard. It tells of a good man, a son of God, *the* Son of God, forsaken of his God. That central word of the seven is found in Matthew and in Mark, but not in Luke or John; but the fifth word has been preserved by John; that is, "I thirst," the shortest, but not quite the sharpest of all the Master's

words, though under a bodily aspect, perhaps the sharpest of them all. John has also treasured up another very precious saying of Jesus Christ on the cross, that is the wondrous word, "It is finished." This was the last word but one, "It is finished," the gathering up of all his lifework, for he had left nothing undone, no thread was left a-ravelling, the whole fabric of redemption had been woven, like his garment, from the top throughout, and it was finished to perfection. After he had said, "It is finished," he uttered the last word of all, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," which I have taken for a text to-night; but to which I will not come immediately.

There has been a great deal said about these seven cries from the cross by divers writers; and though I have read what many of them have written, I cannot add anything to what they have said, since they have delighted to dwell upon these seven last cries; and here the most ancient writers, of what would be called the Romish school, are not to be excelled, even by Protestants, in their intense devotion to every letter of our Saviour's dying words; and they sometimes strike out new meanings, richer and more rare than any that have occurred to the far cooler minds of modern critics, who are as a rule greatly blessed with moles' eyes, able to see where there is nothing to be seen, but never able to see when there is anything worth seeing. Modern criticism, like modern theology, if it were put in the Garden of Eden, would not see a flower. It is like the sirocco that blasts and burns, it is without either dew or unction; in fact, it is the very opposite of these precious things, and proves itself to be unblest of God, and unblessing to men.

Now concerning these seven cries from the cross, many authors have drawn from them lessons concerning *seven duties*. Listen. When our Lord said, "Father, forgive them," in effect, he said to us, "Forgive your enemies." Even when they despitefully use you, and put you to terrible pain, be ready to pardon them. Be like the sandalwood tree, which perfumes the axe that fells it. Be all gentleness, and kindness, and love; and be this your prayer, "Father, forgive them."

The next duty is taken from the second cry, namely, that of penitence and faith in Christ, for he said to the dying thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Have you, like him, confessed your sin? Have you his faith, and his prayerfulness? Then you shall be accepted even as he was. Learn, then, from the second cry, the duty of penitence and faith.

When our Lord, in the third cry, said to his mother, "Woman, behold thy son!" he taught us the duty of filial love. No Christian must ever be short of love to his mother, his father, or to any of those who are endeared to him by relationships which God has appointed for us to observe. Oh, by the dying love of Christ to his mother, let no man here unman himself by forgetting his mother! She bore you; bear her in her old age, and lovingly cherish her even to the last.

Jesus Christ's fourth cry teaches us the duty of clinging to God, and trusting in God: "My God, my God." See how, with both hands, he takes hold of him: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He cannot bear to be left of God; all else causes

him but little pain compared with the anguish of being forsaken of his God. So learn to cling to God, to grip him with a double-handed faith; and if thou dost even think that he has forsaken thee, cry after him, and say, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me, for I cannot bear to be without thee."

The fifth cry, "I thirst," teaches us to set a high value upon the fulfilment of God's Word. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." Take thou good heed, in all thy grief and weakness, still to preserve the Word of thy God, and to obey the precept, learn the doctrine, and delight in the promise. As thy Lord, in his great anguish said, "I thirst," because it was written that so he would speak, do thou have regard unto the Word of the Lord even in little things.

That sixth cry, "It is finished," teaches us perfect obedience. Go through with thy keeping of God's commandment; leave out no command, keep on obeying till thou canst say, "It is finished." Work thy likework, obey thy Master, suffer or serve according to his will, but rest not till thou canst say with thy Lord, "It is finished." "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

And that last word, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," teaches us resignation. Yield all things, yield up even thy spirit to God at his bidding. Stand still, and make a full surrender to the Lord, and let this be thy watchword from the first even to the last, "Into thy hands, my Father, I commend my spirit."

I think that this study of Christ's last words should interest you; therefore let me linger a little longer upon it. Those seven cries from the cross also teach us something about *the attributes and offices of our Master*. They are seven windows of agate, and gates of carbuncle, through which you may see him, and approach him.

First, would you see him as Intercessor? Then he cries, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Would you look at him as King? Then hear his second word, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Would you mark him as a tender Guardian? Hear him say to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son!" and to John, "Behold thy mother!" Would you peer into the dark abyss of the agonies of his soul? Hear him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Would you understand the reality and the intensity of his bodily sufferings? Then hear him say, "I thirst," for there is something exquisite in the torture of thirst when brought on by the fever of bleeding wounds. Men on the battle-field, who have lost much blood, are devoured with thirst, and tell you that it is the worst pang of all. "I thirst," says Jesus. See the Sufferer in the body, and understand how he can sympathize with you who suffer, since he suffered so much on the cross. Would you see him as the Finisher of your salvation? Then hear his cry, "*Consummatum est*"—"It is finished." Oh, glorious note! Here you see the blessed Finisher of your faith. And would you then take one more gaze, and understand how voluntary was his suffering? Then hear him say, not as one who is robbed of life, but as one who takes his soul, and hands it over to the keeping of another, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Is there not much to be learnt from these cries from the cross? Surely these seven notes make a wondrous scale of music if we do but know how to listen to them. Let me run up the scale again. Here, first, you have Christ's fellowship with men: "Father, forgive them." He stands side by side with sinners, and tries to make an apology for them: "They know not what they do." Here is, next, his kingly power. He sets open heaven's gate to the dying thief, and bids him enter. "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Thirdly, behold his human relationship. How near of kin he is to us! "Woman, behold thy son!" Remember how he says, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. He belongs to the human family. He is more of a man than any man. As surely as he is very God of very God, he is also very man of very man, taking into himself the nature, not of the Jew only, but of the Gentile, too. Belonging to his own nationality, but rising above all, he is the Man of men, the Son of man.

See, next, his taking our sin. You say, "Which note is that?" Well, they are all to that effect; but this one chiefly, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It was because he bore our sins in his own body on the tree that he was forsaken of God. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," and hence the bitter cry, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" Behold him, in that fifth cry, "I thirst," taking, not only our sin, but also our infirmity, and all the suffering of our bodily nature. Then, if you would see his fulness as well as his weakness, if you would see his all-sufficiency as well as his sorrow, hear him cry, "It is finished." What a wonderful fulness there is in that note! Redemption is all accomplished; it is all complete; it is all perfect. There is nothing left, not a drop of bitterness in the cup of gall; Jesus has drained it dry. There is not a farthing to be added to the ransom price; Jesus has paid it all. Behold his fulness in the cry, "It is finished." And then, if you would see how he has reconciled us to himself, behold him, the Man who was made a curse for us, returning with a blessing to his Father, and taking us with him, as he draws us all up by that last dear word, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

Christ goes back to the Father, for "It is finished," and you and I come to the Father through his perfect work.

I have only practised two or three tunes that can be played upon this harp, but it is a wonderful instrument. If it be not a harp of ten strings, it is, at any rate, an instrument of seven strings, and neither time nor eternity shall ever be able to fetch all the music out of them. Those seven dying words of the ever-living Christ will make melody for us in glory through all the ages of eternity.

I shall now ask your attention for a little time to the text itself: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

Do you see our Lord? He is dying; and as yet, his face is toward man. His last word to man is the cry, "It is finished." Hear, all ye sons of men, he speaks to you, "It is finished." Could you

have a choicer word with which he should say "Adieu" to you in the hour of death? He tells you not to fear that his work is imperfect, not to tremble lest it should prove insufficient. He speaks to you, and declares with his dying utterance, "It is finished." Now he has done with you, and he turns his face the other way. His day's work is done, his more than Herculean toil is accomplished, and the great Champion is going back to his Father's throne, and he speaks; but not to you. His last word is addressed to his Father, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." These are his first words in going home to his Father, as "It is finished," is his last word as, for a while, he quits our company. Think of these words, and may they be your first words, too, when you return to your Father! May you speak thus to your Divine Father in the hour of death! The words were much hackneyed in Romish times; but they are not spoilt even for that. They used to be said in the Latin by dying men, "*In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum.*" Every dying man used to try to say those words in Latin; and if he did not, somebody tried to say them for him. They were made into a kind of spell of witchcraft; and so they lost that sweetness to our ears in the Latin; but in the English they shall always stand as the very essence of music for a dying saint, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

It is very noteworthy that the last words that our Lord used were quoted from the Scriptures. This sentence is taken, as I daresay most of you know, from the thirty-first Psalm, and the fifth verse. Let me read it to you. What a proof it is of how full Christ was of the Bible! He was not one of those who think little of the Word of God. He was saturated with it. He was as full of Scripture as the fleece of Gideon was full of dew. He could not speak even in his death without uttering Scripture. This is how David put it, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Now, beloved, the Saviour altered this passage, or else it would not quite have suited him. Do you see, first, he was obliged, in order to fit it to his own case, to add something to it? What did he add to it? Why, that word, "Father." David said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit;" but Jesus says, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Blessed advance! He knew more than David did, for he was more the Son of God than David could be. He was *the* Son of God in a very high and special sense by eternal filiation; and so he begins the prayer with, "Father." But then he takes something from it. It was needful that he should do so, for David said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me." Our blessed Master was not redeemed, for he was the Redeemer; and he could have said, "Into thine hand I commit my spirit, for I have redeemed my people;" but that he did not choose to say. He simply took that part which suited himself, and used it as his own, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Oh, my brethren, you will not do better, after all, than to quote Scripture, especially in prayer. There are no prayers so good as those that are full of the Word of God. May all our speech be flavoured with texts! I wish that it were more so. They laughed at our Puritan forefathers because the very names of their children were fetched out of passages

of Scripture; but I, for my part, had much rather be laughed at for talking much of Scripture than for talking much of trashy novels—novels with which (I am ashamed to say it) many a sermon nowadays is larded, ay, larded with novels that are not fit for decent men to read, and which are coated over till one hardly knows whether he is hearing about a historical event, or only a piece of fiction—from which abomination, good Lord, deliver us!

So, then, you see how well the Saviour used Scripture, and how, from his first battle with the devil in the wilderness till his last struggle with death on the cross, his weapon was ever, "It is written."

Now, I am coming to the text itself, and I am going to preach from it for only a very short time. In doing so, firstly, *let us learn the doctrine* of this last cry from the cross; secondly, *let us practise the duty;* and thirdly, *let us enjoy the privilege.*

I. First, LET US LEARN THE DOCTRINE of our Lord's last cry from the cross.

What is the doctrine of this last word of our Lord Jesus Christ? *God is his Father, and God is our Father.* He who himself said, "Father," did not say for himself, "Our Father," for the Father is Christ's Father in a higher sense than he is ours; but yet he is not more truly the Father of Christ than he is our Father if we have believed in Jesus. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Believe the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God to his people. As I have warned you before, abhor the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God, for it is a lie, and a deep deception. It stabs at the heart, first, of the doctrine of the adoption, which is taught in Scripture, for how can God adopt men if they are all his children already? In the second place, it stabs at the heart of the doctrine of regeneration, which is certainly taught in the Word of God. Now it is by regeneration and faith that we become the children of God, but how can that be if we are the children of God already? "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." How can God give to men the power to become his sons if they have it already? Believe not that lie of the devil, but believe this truth of God, that Christ and all who are by living faith in Christ may rejoice in the Fatherhood of God.

Next learn this doctrine, that *in this fact lies our chief comfort.* In our hour of trouble, in our time of warfare, let us say, "Father." You notice that the first cry from the cross is like the last; the highest note is like the lowest. Jesus begins with, "Father, forgive them," and he finishes with, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." To help you in a stern duty like forgiveness, cry, "Father." To help you in sore suffering and death, cry, "Father." Your main strength lies in your being truly a child of God.

Learn the next doctrine, that *dying is going home to our Father.* I said to an old friend, not long ago, "Old Mr. So-and-so has gone home." I meant that he was dead He said, "Yes, where else

should he go?" I thought that was a wise question. Where else should we go? When we grow grey, and our day's work is done, where should we go but home? So, when Christ has said, "It is finished," his next word, of course, is "Father." He has finished his earthly course, and now he will go home to heaven. Just as a child runs to its mother's bosom when it is tired, and wants to fall asleep, so Christ says, "Father," ere he falls asleep in death.

Learn another doctrine, that if God is our Father, and we regard ourselves as going home when we die, because we go to him, then *he will receive us.* There is no hint that we can commit our spirit to God, and yet that God will not have us. Remember how Stephen, beneath a shower of stones, cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Let us, however we may die, make this our last emotion if not our last expression, "Father, receive my spirit." Shall not our heavenly Father receive his children? If ye, being evil, receive your children at nightfall, when they come home to sleep, shall not your Father, who is in heaven, receive you when your day's work is done? That is the doctrine we are to learn from this last cry from the cross, the Fatherhood of God and all that comes of it to believers.

II. Secondly, LET US PRACTISE THE DUTY.

That duty seems to me to be, first, *resignation.* Whenever anything distresses and alarms you, resign yourself to God. Say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Sing with Faber, —

> "I bow me to thy will, O God,
> And all thy ways adore;
> And every day I live I'll seek
> To please thee more and more."

Learn, next, the duty of *prayer.* When thou art in the very anguish of pain, when thou art surrounded by bitter griefs of mind as well as of body, still pray. Drop not the "Our Father." Let not your cries be addressed to the air; let not your moans be to your physician, or your nurse; but cry, "Father." Does not a child so cry when it has lost its way? If it be in the dark at night, and it starts up in a lone room, does it not cry out, "Father"; and is not a father's heart touched by that cry? Is there anybody here who has never cried to God? Is there one here who has never said "Father"? Then, my Father, put thy love into their hearts, and make them to-night say, "I will arise, and go to my Father." You shall truly be known to be the sons of God if that cry is in your heart and on your lips.

The next duty is *the committal of ourselves to God by faith.* Give yourselves up to God, trust yourselves with God. Every morning, when you get up, take yourself, and put yourself into God's custody; lock yourself up, as it were, in the casket of divine protection; and every night, when you have unlocked the box, ere you fall asleep, lock it again, and give the key into the hand of him who is able to keep you when the image of death is on your face. Before you sleep, commit yourself to God; I mean, do that when there is nothing to frighten you, when everything is going smoothly, when the wind blows softly from the south, and the barque is speeding towards its desired haven, still make not thyself quiet with thine own quieting.

He who carves for himself will cut his fingers, and get an empty plate. He who leaves God to carve for him shall often have fat things full of marrow placed before him. If thou canst trust, God will reward thy trusting in a way that thou knowest not as yet.

And then practise one other duty, that of *the personal and continual realization of God's presence.* "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." "Thou art here; I know that thou art. I realize that thou art here in the time of sorrow, and of danger; and I put myself into thy hands. Just as I would give myself to the protection of a policeman, or a soldier, if anyone attacked me, so do I commit myself to thee, thou unseen Guardian of the night, thou unwearied Keeper of the day. Thou shalt cover my head in the day of battle. Beneath thy wings will I trust, as a chick hides beneath the hen."

See, then, your duty. It is to resign yourself to God, pray to God, commit yourself to God, and rest in a sense of the presence of God. May the Spirit of God help you in the practice of such priceless duties as these!

III. Now, lastly, LET US ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE.

First, let us enjoy the high privilege of *resting in God in all times of danger and pain.* The doctor has just told you that you will have to undergo an operation. Say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." There is every probability that that weakness of yours, or that disease of yours, will increase upon you, and that by-and-by you will have to take to your bed, and lie there perhaps for many a day. Then say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Do not fret; for that will not help you. Do not fear the future; for that will not aid you. Give yourself up (it is your privilege to do so) to the keeping of those dear hands that were pierced for you, to the love of that dear heart which was set abroach with the spear to purchase your redemption. It is wonderful what rest of spirit God can give to a man or a woman in the very worst condition. Oh, how some of the martyrs have sung at the stake! How they have rejoiced when on the rack! Bonner's coal-hole, across the water there, at Fulham, where he shut up the martyrs, was a wretched place to lie in on a cold winter's night; but they said, "They did rouse them in the straw, as they lay in the coal-hole; with the sweetest singing out of heaven, and when Bonner said, 'Fie on them that they should make such a noise!' they told him that he, too, would make such a noise if he was as happy as they were." When you have commended your spirit to God, then you have sweet rest in time of danger and pain.

The next privilege is that of *a brave confidence, in the time of death, or in the fear of death.* I was led to think over this text by using it a great many times last Thursday night. Perhaps none of you will ever forget last Thursday night. I do not think that I ever shall, if I live to be as old as Methuselah. From this place till I reached my home, it seemed one continued sheet of fire; and the further I went, the more vivid became the lightning flashes; but when I came at last to turn up Leigham Court Road, then the lightning seemed to come in very bars from the sky; and at last, as I reached the top of the hill, and a crash came of the most startling kind, down poured a torrent of hail, hailstones that I will not attempt to describe, for you

might think that I exaggerated, and then I felt, and my friend with me, that we could hardly expect to reach home alive. We were there at the very centre and summit of the storm. All around us, on every side, and all within us, as it were, seemed nothing but the electric fluid; and God's right arm seemed bared for war. I felt then, "Well, now I am very likely going home," and I commended my spirit to God; and from that moment, though I cannot say that I took much pleasure in the peals of thunder, and the flashes of lightning, yet I felt quite as calm as I do here at this present moment; perhaps a little more calm than I do in the presence of so many people; happy at the thought that, within a single moment, I might understand more than all I could ever learn on earth, and see in an instant more than I could hope to see if I lived here for a century. I could only say to my friend, "Let us commit ourselves to God; we know that we are doing our duty in going on as we are going, and all is well with us." So we could only rejoice together in the prospect of being soon with God. We were not taken home in the chariot of fire; we are still spared a little longer to go on with life's work; but I realize the sweetness of being able to have done with it all, to have no wish, no will, no word, scarcely a prayer, but just to take one's heart up, and hand it over to the great Keeper, saying, "Father, take care of me. So let me live, so let me die. I have henceforth no desire about anything; let it be as *thou* pleasest. Into thy hands I commend my spirit."

This privilege is not only that of having rest in danger, and confidence in the prospect of death; it is also full of *consummate joy*. Beloved, if we know how to commit ourselves into the hands of God, what a place it is for us to be in! What a place to be in,—in the hands of God! There are the myriads of stars; there is the universe itself; God's hand upholds its everlasting pillars, and they do not fall. If we get into the hands of God, we get where all things rest, and we get home and happiness. We have got out of the nothingness of the creature into the all-sufficiency of the Creator. Oh, get you there; hasten to get you there, beloved friends, and live henceforth in the hands of God!

"It is finished." You have not finished; but Christ has. It is all done. What you have to do will only be to work out what he has already finished for you, and show it to the sons of men in your lives. And because it is all finished, therefore say, "Now, Father, I return to thee. My life henceforth shall be to be in thee. My joy shall be to shrink to nothing in the presence of the All-in-all, to die into the eternal life, to sink my *ego* into Jehovah, to let my manhood, my creaturehood live only for its Creator, and manifest only the Creator's glory. O beloved, begin to-morrow morning and end to-night with, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Lord be with you all! Oh, if you have never prayed, God help you to begin to pray now, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—296, 700, 875.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XXIII. 27—49, AND MATTHEW XXVII. 50—54.

Luke xxiii. Verse 27. *And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.*

Their best Friend, the Healer of their sick, the Lover of their children, was about to be put to death, so they might well bewail and lament.

28—30. *But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.*

Our Saviour looked forward to the terrible siege of Jerusalem, the most tragical of all human transactions. I think I do not exaggerate when I say that history contains nothing equal to it. It stands alone in the unutterable agony of men, women, and children in that dreadful time of suffering.

31. *For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*

If the Christ of God is put to death even while the Jewish capital seems vigorous and flourishing, what shall be done when it is all dry and dead, and the Roman legions are round about the doomed city?

32. *And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.*

Every item of scorn was added to our Saviour's death; and yet the Scriptures were thus literally fulfilled, for "He was numbered with the transgressors."

33, 34. *And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.*

Do you hear the hammer fall? "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Do you see the bleeding hands and feet of Jesus? This is all that is extracted by that fearful pressure, nothing but words of pardoning love, a prayer for those who are killing him: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

35. *And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.*

You know how mockery puts salt and vinegar into a wound. A man does not at any time like to be reviled; but when he is full of physical and mental anguish, and his heart is heavy within him, then ridicule is peculiarly full of acid to him.

36, 37. *And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.*

These rough legionaries knew how to put their jests in the most cruel shape, and to press home their scoffs upon their suffering victim.

38. *And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew,*

These were the three languages that could be understood by all the people round about.

38. *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

And so he is, and so he shall be. He has never quitted the throne. The Son of David is still King of the Jews, though they continue to reject him;

but the day shall come when they shall recognize and receive the Messiah. "Then shall they look upon him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

39. *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.*

Matthew and Mark speak of both the thieves as railing at Jesus. We must take their expressions as being literally correct; and if so, both the malefactors at first cast reproaches in Christ's teeth.

40, 41. *But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

Not only has he done nothing worthy of death, but he has done nothing improper, nothing out of place: "This man hath done nothing amiss." The thief bears testimony to the perfect character of this wondrous Man, whom he nevertheless recognized to be divine, as we shall see in the next verse.

42—47. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.*

He was set there at the head of the guard, to watch the execution; and he could not help saying, as he observed the wonderful signs in heaven and earth, "Certainly this was a righteous man."

48. *And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.*

What a change must have come over that ribald crowd! They had shouted, "Crucify him;" they had stood there, and mocked him; and now they are overcome with the sight, and they smite their breasts. Ah, dear friends, their grief did not come to much! Men may smite their breasts; but unless God smites their hearts, all the outward signs of a gracious work will come to nothing at all.

49. *And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.*

Let "these things" be before your mind's eye this evening, and think much of your crucified Lord, all you who are of his acquaintance, and who are numbered amongst his followers.

(As the Exposition is shorter than usual, an appropriate extract is added from Mr. Spurgeon's *Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew.*)

Matthew xxvii. Verse 50. *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered *with a loud voice*, like the shout of a conquering warrior. And what a word it was, "It is finished"! Thousands of sermons have been preached upon that little sentence; but who can tell all the meaning that lies compacted within it? It is a kind of infinite expression for breadth, and depth, and length, and height altogether immeasurable. Christ's life being finished, perfected, completed, he *yielded up the ghost*, willingly dying, laying down his life as he said he would: "I lay down my life for the sheep. I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

51—53. *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.*

Christ's death was the end of Judaism: *The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* As if shocked at the sacrilegious murder of her Lord, the temple rent her garments, like one stricken with horror at some stupendous crime. The body of Christ being rent, the veil of the temple was torn in twain from the top to the bottom. Now was there an entrance made into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; and a way of access to God was opened for every sinner who trusted in Christ's atoning sacrifice.

See what marvels accompanied and followed the death of Christ: *The earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened.* Thus did the material world pay homage to him whom man had rejected; while nature's convulsions foretold what will happen when Christ's voice once more shakes not the earth only, but also heaven.

These first miracles wrought in connection with the death of Christ were typical of spiritual wonders that will be continued till he comes again,—rocky hearts are rent, graves of sin are opened, those who have been dead in trespasses and sins, and buried in sepulchres of lust and evil, are quickened, and come out from among the dead, and go unto *the holy city*, the New Jerusalem.

54. *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

These Roman soldiers had never witnessed such scenes in connection with an execution before, and they could only come to one conclusion about the illustrious prisoner whom they had put to death: "*Truly this was the Son of God.*" It was strange that those men should confess what the chief priests and scribes and elders denied; yet since their day it has often happened that the most abandoned and profane have acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God while their religious rulers have denied his divinity.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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ACHSAH'S ASKING, A PATTERN OF PRAYER.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 11TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 2nd, 1889.

"And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjath-sepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. And Othniel the son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife. And it came to pass, when she came to him, that she moved him to ask of her father a field: and she lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou? And she said unto him, Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water. And Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."—Judges i. 12—15.

IN domestic life we often meet with pictures of life in the house of God. I am sure that we are allowed to find them there, for our Saviour said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" God is a Father, and he likens himself to us as fathers; and we who are believers are God's children; and we are permitted to liken ourselves to our own children; and just as our children would deal with us, and we would deal with them, so may we deal with God, and expect God to deal with us. This little story of a daughter and her father is recorded twice in the Bible. You will find it in the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Joshua, as well as in this first chapter of the Book of Judges. It is not inserted twice without good reasons. I am going to use it to-night simply in this manner—the way in which this woman went to her father, and the way in which her father treated her, may teach us how to go to our Father who is in heaven, and what to expect if we go to him in that fashion.

I would hold up this good woman, Achsah, before you to-night as a kind of model or parable. Our parable shall be Achsah, the daughter of Caleb; she shall be the picture of the true successful pleader with our Father in heaven.

I. And the first thing that I ask you to notice is, HER CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER before she went to her father.

She was newly-married, and she had an estate to go with her to

her husband. She naturally wished that her husband should find in that estate all that was convenient and all that might be profitable; and looking it all over, *she saw what was wanted.* Before you pray, know what you are needing. That man, who blunders down on his knees, with nothing in his mind, will blunder up again, and get nothing for his pains. When this young woman goes to her father to ask for something, she knows what she is going to ask. She will not open her mouth till first her heart has been filled with knowledge as to what she requires. She saw that the land her father gave her would be of very little use to her husband and herself because it wanted water-springs. So she therefore goes to her father with a very definite request, "Give me also springs of water."

My dear friends, do you always, before you pray, think of what you are going to ask? "Oh!" says somebody, "I utter some good words." Does God want your words? Think what you are going to ask before you begin to pray, and then pray like business men. This woman does not say to her father, "Father, listen to me," and then utter some pretty little oration about nothing; but she knows what she is going to ask for, and why she is going to ask it. She sees her need, and she prizes the boon she is about to request. Oh, take note, ye who are much in prayer, that ye rush not to the holy exercise "as the horse rusheth into the battle"; that ye venture not out upon the sea of prayer without knowing within a little whereabouts will be your port! I do believe that God will make you think of many more things while you are in prayer; the Spirit will help your infirmities, and suggest to you other petitions; but before a word escapes your lips, I counsel you to do what Achsah did, know what you really need.

This good woman, before she went to her father with her petition, *asked her husband's help.* When she came to her husband, "she moved him to ask of her father a field." Now, Othniel was a very brave man, and very brave men are generally very bashful men. It is your cowardly man who is often forward and impertinent; but Othniel was so bashful that he did not like asking his uncle Caleb to give him anything more; it looked like grasping. He had received a wife from him, and he had received land from him, and he seemed to say, "No, my good wife, it is all very well for you to put me up to this, but I do not feel like asking for anything more for myself." Still, learn this lesson, good wives, prompt your husbands to pray with you. Brothers, ask your brothers to pray with you. Sisters, be not satisfied to approach the throne of grace alone; but ask your sister to pray with you. It is often a great help in prayer for two of you to agree touching the thing that concerns Christ's kingdom. A cordon of praying souls around the throne of grace will be sure to prevail. God help us to be anxious in prayer to get the help of others! A friend, some time ago, said to me, "My dear pastor, whenever I cannot pray for myself, and there are times when I feel shut up about myself, I always take to praying for you: 'God bless him, at any rate!' and I have not long been praying for you before I begin to feel able to pray for myself." I should like to come in for many of those odd bits of prayer. Whenever any of you get stuck in the mud, do pray for me. It will do you good, and I shall get a blessing. Remember how it is

written of Job, "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends." While he prayed for himself, he remained a captive; but when he prayed for those unfriendly friends of his, then the Lord smiled upon him, and loosed his captivity. So it is a good thing in prayer to imitate this woman, Achsah. Know what you want, and then ask others to join with you in prayer. Wife, especially ask your husband; husband, especially ask your wife. I think there is no sweeter praying on earth than the praying of a husband and a wife together when they plead for their children, and when they invoke a blessing upon each other, and upon the work of the Lord.

Next, Achsah bethought herself of this one thing, that *she was going to present her request to her father.* I suppose that she would not have gone to ask of anybody else; but she said to herself, "Come, Achsah, Caleb is your father. The boon I am going to ask is not of a stranger, who does not know me; but of a father, in whose care I have been ever since I was born." This thought ought to help us in prayer, and it will help us when we remember that we do not go to ask of an enemy, nor to plead with a stranger; but we say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Do you mean it? Do you really believe that God is your Father? Do you feel the spirit of sonship in your heart? If so, this ought to help you to pray with a believing tone. Your Father will give you whatever you need. If there was anything that I wanted, and I should ask it of him, I expect that my dear father, old and feeble as he is, would give it to me if it were within the range of his possibility; and surely, our great and glorious Father, with whom we have lived ever since we were newborn, has favoured us so much that we ought to ask very boldly, and with a childlike familiarity, resting assured that our Father will never be vexed with us because we ask these things. Indeed, he knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him.

So this good woman, Achsah, feeling that it was her father of whom she was going to ask, and seeing that her husband hesitated to join her in her request, made the best of her way to go and pray alone. "Well, well, Othniel, I would have liked you to have gone with me; but as you will not, I am going alone." So she gets upon the ass, which was a familiar way for ladies to ride in that day, and she rides off to her father. The grand old man sees his daughter coming, and by the very look of her he knows that she is coming on business; there is a something about her eye that tells him she is coming with a request. This was not the first time that she had asked something of him. He knew her usual look when she was about to petition him; so he goes to meet her, and she alights from her ass, a token of great and deep respect, just as Rebecca, when she saw Isaac, alighted from the camel. She wished to show how deeply she reverenced that grand man, of whom it was an honour to be a child. Caleb survived Joshua a little while, and still in his old age went out to fight the Canaanites, and conquered Hebron, which the Lord had given him. Achsah pays reverence to her father; but yet she is very hearty in what she is going to say to him.

Now, dear friends, learn again from this good woman how to pray. *She went humbly, yet eagerly.* If others will not pray with you, go

alone; and when you go, go very reverently. It is a shameful thing that there should ever be an irreverent prayer. Thou art on earth, and God is in heaven; multiply not thy words as though thou wert talking to thine equal. Do not speak to God as though thou couldst order him about, and have thy will of him, and he were to be a lackey to thee. Bow low before the Most High; own thyself unworthy to approach him, speaking in the tone of one who is pleading for that which must be a gift of great charity. So shalt thou draw near to God aright; but while thou art humble, have desire in thine eyes, and expectation in thy countenance. Pray as one who means to have what he asks. Say not, as one did, "I ask once for what I want; and if I do not get it, I never ask again." That is unchristian. Plead on if thou knowest that what thou art asking is right. Be like the importunate widow; come again, and again, and again. Be like the prophet's servant, "Go again seven times." Thou wilt at last prevail. This good woman had not to use importunity. The very look of her showed that she wanted something; and therefore her father said, "What wilt thou?"

I think that, at the outset of our meditation, we have learnt something that ought to help us in prayer. If you put even this into practice, though no more was said, you might go away blessed thereby. God grant us to know our need, to be anxious to have the help of our fellow-believers; but to remember that, as we go to our Father, even if nobody will go with us, we may go alone, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and plead our case with our Father in heaven!

II. Now, secondly, in this story of Achsah, kindly notice HER ENCOURAGEMENT. Here we have it: "She lighted from off her ass; and Caleb said unto her, What wilt thou?"

"Oh!" says one, "I could ask anything if my father said to me, 'What wilt thou?'" This is precisely what your great Father does say to you to-night, "What wilt thou?" With all the magnanimity of his great heart, God manifests himself to the praying man or pleading woman, and he says, "What wilt thou? What is thy petition, and what is thy request?"

What do I gather from that question, "What wilt thou?" Why, this. First, *you should know what you want.* Could some Christians here, if God were to say to each of them, "What wilt thou?" answer him? Do you not think that we get into such an indistinct, indiscriminate kind of a way of praying that we do not quite know what we do really want? If it is so with you, do not expect to be heard till you know what you want. Get a distinct, definite request realized by your mind as a pressing want; get it right before your mind's eye as a thing that you must have. That is a blessed preparation for prayer. Caleb said to his daughter, "What wilt thou?" and Christ says to you to-night, "Dear child of mine, what dost thou want of me? Blood-bought daughter, what dost thou want of me?" Will you not, some of you, begin to find up a request or two if you have not one ready on the tip of your tongue? I hope that you have many petitions lying in the centre of your hearts, and that they will not be long in leaping to your lips.

Next, as you ought to know what you want, *you are to ask for it.* God's

way of giving is through our asking. I suppose that he does that in order that he may give twice over, for a prayer is itself a blessing as well as the answer to prayer. Perhaps it sometimes does us as much good to pray for a blessing as to get the blessing. At any rate, this is God's way, "Ask, and ye shall receive." He puts even his own Son, our blessed Saviour, under this rule, for he says even to him, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." It is a rule, then, without exception, that you are to know what you want, and you are to ask for it. Will you do this, dear friend, while the Lord says to you, "What wilt thou?"

And when Caleb said, "What wilt thou?" did he not as good as say to Achsah, "*You shall have what you ask for*"? Come, now, to-night is a sweet, fair night for praying in; I do not know a night when it is not so; but to-night is a delightful night for prayer. You shall have what you ask. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Desires written in your heart by the Holy Ghost will all of them be fulfilled. Come, then, bethink you of these three things, you must know what you want, you must ask for what you want, and you shall have what you want. Thy Father says to thee, as Caleb said to Achsah, "What wilt thou?"

And, once more, *it shall be a pleasure to thy Father to hear thee ask.* There stands Caleb, that good, brave, grand man, and he says to his daughter, "What wilt thou?" He likes to see her open that mouth that is so dear to him; he loves to listen to the music of her voice. The father delights to hear his child tell him what she wants; and it shall be no displeasure to thy God to hear thee pray to-night. It shall be a joy to him to have thy petition spread before him. Many fathers would quite as soon that their children did not tell them all their wants; in fact, the fewer their wants, the better pleased will their parents be; but our Father in heaven feels a pleasure in giving to us all we need, for giving does not impoverish him, and withholding would not enrich him. He as much delights to give as the sun delights to shine. It is the very element of God to be scattering bounties. Come, then, and pray to him; thou wilt thus please him more than thou wilt please thyself. I wish that I could so speak to-night that every child of God here would say, "The preacher is talking to me. He means that I have to pray, and that God will hear me, and bless me." Yes, that is precisely what I do mean. Take my advice, and prove it yourself to-night; and see if it be not so, that God takes delight in thy poor, feeble, broken prayer, and grants thy humble petition.

Thus we have seen Achsah's consideration before prayer, and her encouragement to pray.

III. Now comes HER PRAYER itself.

As soon as she found that she had an audience with her father of the kindliest sort, she said to him, "*Give me a blessing.*" I like that petition; it is a good beginning, "Give me a blessing." I should like to put that prayer into every believing mouth here to-night, "Give me a blessing. Whatever thou dost not give me, give me a blessing. Whatever else thou givest me, do not fail to give me a

blessing." A father's blessing is an inheritance to a loving child. "Give me a blessing." What is the blessing of God? If he shall say, "Thou art blessed," thou mayest defy the devil to make thee cursed. If the Lord calls thee blessed, thou art blessed. Though covered with boils, as Job was, thou art blessed. Though near to death, like Lazarus, with the dogs licking his sores, thou art blessed. If thou shouldst be dying, like Stephen, beneath the stones of murderous enemies, if God bless thee, what more canst thou wish for? Nay, Lord, put me anywhere that thou wilt, as long as I get thy blessing. Deny me what thou wilt, only give me thy blessing. I am rich in poverty, if thou dost bless me. So Achsah said to her father, "Give me a blessing." I wish that prayer might be prayed by everybody here to-night. Printers here to-night, pray for once, if you have not prayed before, "Lord, give me a blessing." Soldiers, pray your gracious God to give you a blessing. Young men and maidens, old men and fathers, take this prayer of Achsah's upon your hearts to-night, "Give me a blessing." Why, if the Lord shall hear that prayer from everybody in this place, what a blessed company we shall be; and we shall go our way to be a blessing to this City of London beyond what we have ever been before!

Notice next, in Achsah's prayer, how *she mingled gratitude with her petition:* "Give me a blessing: for thou hast given me a south land." We like, when people ask anything of us, to hear them say, "You did help me, you know, sir, a month ago;" but if they seem to come to you, and quite forget that you ever helped them, and never thank you, never say a word about it, but come begging again and again, you say to yourself, "Why, I helped that fellow a month ago! He never says a word about that." "Have I not seen you before?" "No, sir; I do not know that you ever have." "Ah!" you say to yourself, "he will get no more out of me. He is not grateful for what he has had." I do believe that ingratitude seals up the springs of blessing. When we do not praise God for what we have received from him, it seems to me but just that he should say, "I am not going to cast my pearls before swine. I shall not give my precious things to those who set no value upon them." When thou art praying, take to praising also; thou wilt gather strength thereby. When a man has to take a long jump, you have seen him go back a good distance, and then run forward to get a spring. Go back in grateful praise to God for what he has done for thee in days gone by, and then get a spring for thy leap for a future blessing, or a present blessing. Mingle gratitude with all thy prayers.

There was not only gratitude in this woman's prayer, but *she used former gifts as a plea for more:* "Thou hast given me a south land; give me also." Oh, yes, that is grand argument with God: "Thou hast given me; therefore, give me some more." You cannot always use this argument with men, for if you remind them that they have given you so much, they say, "Well, now, I think that somebody else must have a turn. Could you not go next door?" It is never so with God. There is no argument with him like this, "Lord, thou hast done this to me; thou art always the same; thine all-sufficiency is not abated; therefore, do again what thou hast done!" Make every gift that God

gives thee a plea for another gift; and when thou hast that other gift, make it a plea for another gift: he loves you to do this. Every blessing given contains the eggs of other blessings within it. Thou must take the blessing, and find the hidden eggs, and let them be hatched by thine earnestness, and there shall be a whole brood of blessings springing out of a single blessing. See thou to that.

But this good woman *used this plea in a particular way:* she said, "Thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water." This was as much as to say, "Though thou hast given me the south land, and I thank thee for it, it is no good to me unless I have water for it. It is a very hot bit of ground, this south land; it wants irrigating. My husband and I cannot get a living from it unless thou give us springs of water." Do you see the way you are to pray? "Lord, thou hast given me so much, and it will all be good for nothing if thou dost not give me more. If thou dost not finish, it is a pity that thou didst ever begin; thou hast given me very many mercies, but if I do not have many more, all thy generosity will be lost. Thou dost not begin to build unless thou meanest to finish; and so I come to thee to say, 'Thou hast given me a south land, but it is dry; give me also springs of water to make it of real value to me.'" In this prayer of Achsah's there is a particularity and a speciality: "Give me also springs of water." She knew what she was praying for; and that is the way to pray. When you ask of God, ask distinctly: "Give me springs of water." You may say, "Give me my daily bread." You may cry, "Give me a sense of pardoned sin." You may distinctly ask for anything which God has promised to give; but mind that, like this woman, you are distinct and plain in what you ask of God: "Give me springs of water."

Now, it seems to me, to-night, as if I could pray that prayer, "Give me springs of water." "Lord, thou hast given me a south land, all this congregation, Sunday after Sunday, all this multitude of people; but, Lord, how can I preach to them if thou dost not give me springs of water? 'All my fresh springs are in thee.' What is the use of the hearers if there be not the power of the Holy Spirit going with the Word to bless them? Give me springs of water." Now, I can suppose a Sunday-school teacher here to-night saying, "Lord, I thank thee for my interesting class, and for the attention that the scholars pay to what I say to them; but, Lord, what is the good of my children to me unless thou give me springs of water? Oh, that, out of myself, out of my very soul, might flow rivers of living water for my dear scholars, and that I might have the power of thy Holy Spirit with all my teaching! Give me springs of water." I can imagine a Christian parent here saying, "Lord, I thank thee for my wife and my children; I thank thee that thou hast given me servants over whom I have influence; I thank thee for all these; but what is the use of my being the head of a family unless thou give me springs of grace that, like David, I may bless my household, and see my children grow up in thy fear? Give me springs of water." The point of this petition is this, "O Lord, what thou hast given me is of little good to me unless thou give me something more." O dear hearers, if God has given you money, pray that he will give you grace to use it

aright; or else, if you hoard it up or spend it, it may, in either case, prove a curse to you! Pray, "Give me springs of water; give me grace to use my wealth aright." Some here have many talents. Riches in the brain are among the best of riches. Be thankful to God for your talents; but cry, "Lord, give me of thy grace, that I may use my talents for thy glory. Give me springs of water, or else my talents shall be a dry and thirsty land, yielding no fruit unto thee. Give me springs of water." You see, the prayer is not merely for water; but for springs of water. "Give me a perpetual, eternal, ever-flowing fountain. Give me grace that shall never fail; but shall flow, and flow on, and flow for ever. Give me a constant supply: "Give me springs of water."

This woman's prayer, then, I have thus tried to commend to you. Oh, that we might all have grace to copy her!

IV. Now, lastly, see HER SUCCESS. Upon this I will not detain you more than a minute or two. "Caleb gave her the upper springs and the nether springs."

Observe, *her father gave her what she asked.* She asked for springs, and he gave her springs. "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?" God gives us what we ask for when it is wise to do so. Sometimes we make mistakes, and ask for the wrong thing; and then he is kind enough to put the pen through the petition, and write another word into the prayer, and answer the amended prayer rather than the first foolish edition of it. Caleb gave Achsah what she asked.

Next, *he gave her in large measure.* She asked for springs of water, and he gave her the upper springs and the nether springs. The Lord "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think." Some use that passage in prayer, and misquote it, "above what we can ask or even think." That is not in the Bible, because you can ask or even think anything you like; but it is "above all that we ask, or think." Our asking or our thinking falls short; but God's giving never does.

And *her father gave her this without a word of upbraiding.* He did not say, "Ah, you Achsah, you are always begging of me!" He did not say, "Now that I have given you to your husband, it is too bad of him to let you come and ask for more from me, when I have given you plenty already." There are some gruff old fathers who would speak like that to their daughters, and say, "No, no, no! Come, come, I cannot stand this; you have a good portion already, my girl, and I have others to think of as well as you." No, Caleb gave her the upper and the nether springs, and never said a word by way of blaming her; but I will be bound to say that he smiled on her, as he said, "Take the upper and the nether springs, and may you and your husband enjoy the whole! You have only asked, after all, what my heart delights to give you." Now, may the Lord grant unto us to-night to ask of him in wisdom, and may he not have to upbraid us, but give us all manner of blessings both of the upper and the nether springs, both of heaven and earth, both of eternity and time, and give them freely, and not say even a single word by way of upbraiding us!

I have done with this last point when I have asked a plain question or two. Why is it that, to-night, some of you dear friends have a very parched-up inheritance? The grass will not grow, and the corn will not grow, nothing good seems to grow. You have been ploughing, and turning the plot up, and sowing, and weeding, and yet nothing comes of it. You are a believer, and you have an inheritance; but you are not very much given to song, not very cheery, not very happy; and you are sitting here to-night, and singing, to the tune Job,—

> "Lord, what a wretched land is this,
> That yields us no supply!"

Well, why is that? There is no need for it. Your heavenly Father does not want you to be in that miserable condition. There is something to be had that would lift you out of that state, and change your tone altogether. May every child of God here go to his Father, just like Achsah went to Caleb! Pour out your heart before the Lord, with all the simple ease and naturalness of a trustful, loving child.

Do you say, "Oh, I could not do that"? Then I shall have to ask you this question, "Are we truly the children of God if we never feel towards him any of that holy boldness?" Do you not think that every child must feel a measure of that confidence towards his father? If there is a son in the world who says, "No, I—I—I really could not speak to my father," well, I shall not make any enquiries, but I know that there is something wrong up at his home, there is something not right either with the father or with the boy. Wherever there is a loving home, you never hear the son or daughter say, "You know, I—I—I could not ask my father." I hope that we have none of us got into that condition with regard to our earthly fathers; let none of us be in that condition with regard to our heavenly Father.

> "My soul, ask what thou wilt,
> Thou canst not be too bold;
> Since his own blood for thee he spilt
> What else can he withhold?"

Come, then, while in the pew to-night, before we gather at the communion-table, and present thy petition with a childlike confidence, and expect it to be heard, and expect to-night to have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

And you, poor sinners, who cannot pray like children, what are you to do? Well, you remember how the Saviour said to the Syrophenician woman, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." But she answered, "Yes, Lord; yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs." You come in for the crumbs to-night; for if a man is satisfied to eat crumbs with the dogs, God will not be satisfied till he makes him eat bread with the children. If thou wilt take the lowest place, God will give thee a higher place before long. Come thou to Jesus, and trust in him henceforth and for ever. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW VII.

Verse 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*

You are not called to judge; you are not qualified to judge: "God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." There is much better work to be done by us than that of setting up as judges of others.

2. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*

Do not judge the whole character of a man by one single action; do not attempt to judge his motives; you cannot read his heart; you are not omniscient; you are not infallible. You will very soon find other people judging you; and when, one of these days, you shall be falsely judged and condemned, you will not need to have any surprise if you have done the same thing yourself; it will be only your corn measured back to you with the bushel you used in measuring other people's.

3. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*

There is something in yourself that is worthy of your consideration, something that you ought to consider, a big, blinding beam in your own eye. As for the mote that is in your brother's eye, there is no need that you should even see it. Why beholdest thou it? Charity is ever a little blind to the faults of others, for it remembers so well its own.

4. *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*

A blind man cannot be a good oculist; he should see well who tries to mend other people's eyes; but with a beam in one's own eye, it must be poor work to attempt to take motes out of the eyes of others. This does not prevent our using reproof and rebuke when they are needed. Even under the Law, the command was given, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him," as if it were a kind of hatred to avoid the duty of kindly and gentle rebuke. That is a very different thing from exposing the faults of others, and aggravating and exaggerating the faults of others, as, alas, so many do! Oh, how much misery might be saved in the world if the scandal-market were not so brisk! Perhaps tongues would not move so fast if eyes were used to a better purpose.

5, 6. *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*

There are some holy enjoyments, some gracious experiences, some deep doctrines of the Word of God, which it would be out of place to speak of before certain profane and unclean persons. They would only make a jest of them; perhaps they might persecute you on account of them. No; holy things are for holy men; and as of old the crier in the Grecian temple was wont to say, before the mysteries were performed, "Far hence, ye profane!" so sometimes, before we enter into the innermost circle of Christian converse, it would be well for us to notice who is listening.

7, 8. *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth;*

This is the rule of God's kingdom invariably, whenever the request is a right one, and is presented in a right manner.

8—11. *And he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*

The point is, not only that God gives, but that he knows how to give. If he were always to give according to our prayers, it might be very injurious to us. He might give us that with which we could do hurt, as when a father should put a stone into a boy's hand; or he might give us that which might do us hurt, as if a father were to give his child a serpent. He will do neither of these things; but he will answer us in discretion, and with prudence will he fulfil our desires. You know how to give to your children; how much more shall your infinitely-wise Father, who from heaven sees all the surroundings of men, give good things to them that ask him?

12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*

"The law and the prophets" are here condensed into a single sentence. This is the golden rule, a handy rule, a perpetually-applicable rule, useful in every condition, and it never makes a mistake.

13, 14. *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*

It is a way of self-denial, it is a way of humility, it is a way which is distasteful to the natural pride of men; it is a precise way, it is a holy way, a strait way, and therefore men do not care for it. They are too big, too proud, to go along a narrow lane to heaven; yet this is the right way. There are many broad ways, as Bunyan says, that abut upon it; but you may know them by their being broad, and you may know them by their being crowded. The Christian man has to swim against the current; he has to do more than that, he has to go against himself, so strait is the road; but if you wish to go down to perdition, you have only to float with the stream, and you can have any quantity of company that you like.

15. *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing,*

Dressed like Elijah.

15. *But inwardly they are ravening wolves.*

Very Ahabs and Jezebels; and they will deceive you, if you are not divinely guarded against them.

16. *Ye shall know them—*

How? By their eloquence? No. Some of the worst of teachers have had great persuasiveness. You shall know them by their earnestness? No. Some have compassed sea and land to make proselytes to a lie. You shall know them how, then?

16. *By their fruits.*

If their teaching makes you better, if it makes you love God, if it draws you to holiness, if it inspires you with noble and heroic sentiments, so that you imitate Christ, then listen to them.

16—20. *Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

After all, this is the best test of any doctrine, the practice to which it leads. I remember one day discussing with a person about the doctrine of

future punishment. We were arguing, and the gentleman, who owned the vessel on which we were, said, "Come up on deck, and enjoy the fresh air, and leave that subject; but," he said, "you, sir, will kindly go as far as possible from my men, for they are bad enough as they are, and if you tell them there is no punishment for sin, they will be worse than ever. As for you, Mr. Spurgeon, you may go where you like, you won't do them any harm." I thought that rough and ready mode of argument was about as good a commendation as I could wish to have.

21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

Not talking, but doing, not loud profession, but quiet, practical godliness, wins the day.

22, 23. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

If Christ does not know us, it matters not what we do. Even if we work miracles, if we astound the world with our abilities, it is all nothing if Christ does not know us. Now, I think there are many here who can humbly but confidently say, "He knows me." He knows some of us, if by nothing else, by our constantly begging of him. We have been at him day and night in our necessities, pleading for his bounty, his mercy, his company; and he cannot say he does not know us. He knows a great deal about us, even through our prayers, if by no other way.

24. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*

What a mercy there is a rock to build on! We could not have made one; but there is the rock.

25. *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,*

For the best man will have his troubles.

25. *And beat upon that house;*

For the best man will feel the troubles; they will come home to him.

25—27. *And it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended,*

For the worst of men will have their troubles. There is no escaping the trials of life by sin.

27. *And the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

There was no building it again; it was altogether gone, swept right away, no vestige of it remained.

28, 29. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

He touched their conscience; his teaching came home to them; they could not help feeling that it was true. Besides, he did not keep on quoting Rabbi This and Rabbi That, but he spoke from his own knowledge: "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHARITY AND PURITY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 18TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, May 23rd, 1889.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." —James i. 27.

THERE is a great deal said, and a great deal written, and a great deal of zeal on the one side, and of anger on the other, expended upon the externals of religion. Some think that they should be very fine, not to say gaudy, very impressive, not to say imposing. They like what they call "bright" services, though we might call them by another name. But the great question with many people is, "What are to be the externals of religion?" What dress is religion to wear? Shall it be robed in the plainness of Quakerdom, or shall it be adorned with all the brilliance of Romanism? Which shall it be?

Well, dear friends, after all, we may spend much time over that question, and find no satisfactory answer to it; but the Biblical Ritualism, the pure external worship, the true embodiment of the inward principles of religion is to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. Charity and purity are the two great garments of Christianity. Charity was once cried up by the Romanists to an extreme point, almsgiving seeming to be to many the beginning and the end of piety. It was an almsgiving which had a great deal that was excellent about it, and which I cannot regard, as some do, altogether with abhorrence; an almsgiving which covered this land with houses of entertainment for the poor, so that they journeyed from one halting-place to another, and were freely lodged and housed; and we had, at least, no poor law, or workhouse, with all (I was about to say) the horrors which accompany the present system. But, unfortunately, charity was thought to be everything, and purity was too much neglected; so that even those houses which were originally built to be the abode of those who should help the poor and needy, and instruct the ignorant, became, to a sad degree, the haunts of luxury and vice. The monastery, which should

have been a place of pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, as it entertained the fatherless and the widows, was not famed for being unspotted by the world's sins; but, on the contrary, it was famous or infamous for its foulness. I have no doubt that this was a great deal exaggerated; but, at any rate, the accusation did seem to lie, to a very sad extent, against it, that those who were supposed to be dedicated to God were not such consecrated men as they professed to be. Purity went down, and charity went up.

Well, in these days, I sometimes fear lest we should by no means insist too much on purity, but should certainly insist too little upon charity. The visitation of the fatherless and widows in their affliction is not left optional. It is not to be the privilege of a few worldly men who give all their substance to orphanages. Every Christian is bound to wear his part of the external dress of religion, that is, charity. This charity is to be manifested especially to those who need it most, whose need cannot be a matter of imposture, but must be real. These are the fatherless and widows, during the time of their destitution and affliction, when the orphans are not able to earn the bread that perishes, and the mother has her children weeping around her, and pining in poverty. Not only *may* this charity be shown, but it *must* be manifested if we would have pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father. The increase of charity, of careful and discreet consideration for the poor and needy, would bring a great blessing with it; and is what is greatly needed even in these times, when, perhaps, we fancy that we are doing almost enough in this direction, although we certainly are not.

Yet charity without purity will be of no avail. In vain should we give all our substance to the poor, and give our bodies to be burned, if we do not walk in the way of holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord." If we do not come out from the world, and keep ourselves from its polluting influence, we have not yet learned what pure and undefiled religion really is. We may be very orthodox in creed, or we may be very far advanced in our knowledge of religious matters, we may think ourselves to be Hebrews of the Hebrews, Pharisees of the Pharisees, and as touching the righteousness which is of the law, blameless; but we are in the sight of God only as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal, unless, by divine grace, we have learned to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.

Without forgetting what I have said to you about charity, we will examine those words in our text which specially speak of purity; and, in doing so, I notice, first, that *they indicate separation*. Look below their surface, and they certainly indicate that. Secondly, *they impress upon us spotlessness*: "to keep himself unspotted from the world." And, thirdly, *they insist upon careful self-watching*.

I. First, then, beloved friends, if you look below the surface of the words here, you will see that THEY INDICATE SEPARATION.

"To keep himself unspotted from the world," implies that the man is not a part of the world. He is in it, but is evidently not of it. He is one thing, and the world is another thing; and he is so much apart from the world that even a spot from the pools of the world would defile him. He is to be quite outside the world even while he is in

it. Those of you who were here on Monday night must have been greatly amused, and also instructed, by what was said by a young colporteur. He was a little fellow; you remember him. He was going along with his pack on his back; and a big man accosted him in this wise: "Well, my little fellow, do you belong to the Militia?" "No, sir, I do not; but I belong to the King's Own." "You little fool," said the man, "why, there is not any king in this country; so you cannot belong to the King's Own." The colporteur replied, "I don't know that I am a fool any more for that, for, do you know, I belong to another country?" "What do you mean by saying that you belong to another country? You are not a foreigner." "Well, I won't say that I am a foreigner; but I can say that I am a stranger in this land; and I do belong, as I have already told you, to another country; and that I am not a fool is quite certain, for in the country to which I belong there is a King, and I am in his army; and if you would like to know how to enlist in it, I have a book in my pack which you can buy, and in which you can read all about my King and his army." It was well put; and it also expressed nothing more than the real truth. Here, in the midst of this world, you and I, if we are truly born again from above, are strangers and pilgrims. We have come into this land as gipsies might have come, pitching our tent here and there, but having no abiding city anywhere. We are in this world as Abraham was in Canaan. We are not related to any of the Canaanites amongst whom we dwell. We are of another country, to wit, a heavenly; and we are looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God." There are some professing Christians who try also to be worldly; but a worldly Christian is an anomaly and a contradiction.

No, beloved friends, if we are truly the Lord's, *we are severed from the world.* I will mention two or three of the many ways in which we are thus separated.

The first is, by divine election. The Lord Jesus Christ had a people given to him, a people whom he received of his Father, as he said, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word." "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." These are they whom God chose in Christ Jesus from before the foundation of the world, having predestinated them, according to the good pleasure of his will, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love; "for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." Now this eternal choice of God has severed believers from the rest of mankind; and they stand apart as much as Israel stood apart in Egypt, even in the midst of the plagues. Thus God's chosen ones constitute a people that shall dwell alone; they shall not be numbered among the nations. He hath made them to be his portion: "for the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance."

This truth, some of you may say, leads us into the great mysteries of the kingdom. Well, in due time, our separation from the world is the result of divine calling as well as divine election, for the apostle

writes, "moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." There is a people in this world who have been called out from the world, and they make up the *ecclesia*, the called-out assembly, the people to whom a voice has come which others have not spiritually heard; the people who have been drawn by Christ, and have run after Christ; the people who were dead, and who have been quickened; the people who were slumbering, and who have been awakened; the people who were afar off, and who have been brought nigh; the people who have been brought out of darkness into Christ's marvellous light; the people whom he has separated unto himself, and who shall show forth his praise. Do you know anything about this calling, my dear hearers? Were you ever led, by conviction of sin, and repentance, and faith, to fly to Jesus? Have you come to him? If so, in that wondrous calling out, you have one evidence that you are distinct from the world that lieth in the wicked one.

Another clear distinguishing mark is redemption. The blood of the paschal lamb was on the lintel and the two side posts of the house of every family of Israel. It was not on any house of the Egyptians; but to their dwellings the destroying angel came with swift, sure, unerring blow, smiting the firstborn in every house throughout the land. It was the blood-mark that distinguished Israel from all the rest of the people; and to-day, only those who are sheltered by the sprinkled blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God, are safe. Christ hath redeemed his people from among men. He loved his Church, and gave himself for her; and he has redeemed that Church, and brought her out of the Egyptian bondage of sin with a high hand and an outstretched arm, redeeming her by power as well as by price; and she shall be his for ever. Hath he not espoused her unto himself, and will he not have her of whom his soul was eternally enamoured, and to whom in the covenant of old he was joined by bonds of everlasting wedlock? Yes, verily, he will have her to be his own bride, world without end. This is another mark of our separation from the world, the blood-red mark of redemption, effectual redemption by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, beloved, in due time separation from the world comes out, externally, more fully in sanctification. There is a people in this world who have another nature from that of the men of this world. Would to God there were more of them! But there has come, by divine grace, a work of Christ in their heart, which has changed their entire nature, aspirations, loves, hates, their whole selves, and made the whole world to become new to them, because they are totally new to it. When this great change is wrought in the heart of a man, it crucifies him to the world and the world to him; and he becomes a member of a community as much above the common race of humanity as a man is above a horse or a dog. He becomes possessed of a higher nature, which was born in him by regeneration, and which lifts him up into familiarity with God, so that he becomes a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. So says this Book on which we rest; and I beseech you to believe that it speaks truly.

Sanctification is the great open separator of Christians from the world; and they are so separate, and so distinct, that they will never

be mixed together, not even in that day when their bones shall lie mingled in the same cemetery, when grave by grave the righteous shall sleep side by side with the wicked. There shall be a distinction in that day of resurrection when the dead in Christ shall rise first: "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." There shall be a distinction in that day when the King's words, "Come, ye blessed," or "Depart, ye cursed," shall make an everlasting division between them; and all the universe shall know that the Lord doth put a difference between Israel and Egypt.

Now, beloved, you can judge for yourselves to-night,—I pray you to do it,—whether you are separate from the world. If you are not, you will be judged with the world. If this day there falls to your lot special grace, as well as special joy, if you have a new life, and a heavenly experience all your own, then, inasmuch as you are not of the world, hear again the words of my text, and keep yourselves "unspotted from the world."

Now, I want you to notice, before I leave this point, that, inasmuch as there is an evident separation between the people of God and the world, *we make it a part of worship to manifest that separation.* Observe what the text says: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, ... To keep himself unspotted from the world." Religion does not consist simply in meeting together for prayer, and in singing hymns and hearing sermons. There is much of this that is profitable, and that glorifies God; but there is something more wanted to complete real worship of God.

When you and I live daily with the fear of God before our eyes, in the presence of men of the world, who care not whether there is a God or no, then are we truly manifesting "pure and undefiled religion." When we judge all our conduct by thinking how it will appear in the sight of God; when, assailed by temptation, we say to ourselves, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" when we keep ourselves apart from every evil thing that might fascinate and entice us, saying, "So did not I, because of the fear of God," this is true worship, quite as real worship as the hymns we sing and the prayers we offer.

Abstinence from evil and seeking that which is right will manifest our separation from the world, especially if the glory of God is our one great object in life. I like that word of my dear friend, Mr. George Müller, when he says, "Never begin a day without feeling joy in the Lord." I think that is a very blessed rule, to live constantly walking in such a way that you and God are on close terms of happy fellowship, so that all that you do you do heartily as unto the Lord. Your common service as a domestic servant, or your public service as a preacher, you do in the presence, not of the great Taskmaster, but of your great Father and Friend, of whom you have become an adopted child, and to whom you are separated to be a priest serving him every day. If everything is done, from the taking down of the shop-shutters on the Monday morning to the putting of them up on Saturday night, as well as what is done on the Sunday, if all is done for God's glory, this will make a great gulf between you and the man of the world who lives for baser ends.

Thus I have tried very plainly to show that the words in our text indicate separation.

II. Now, in the second place, THEY IMPRESS UPON US SPOTLESSNESS: "To keep himself unspotted from the world."

We learn from this, first, that *the Christian never expects to get any good from the world.* He is to keep himself from the world, specially from the spots of the world. Dr. Watts wisely asks,—

> "Is this vile world a friend to grace,
> To help me on to God?"

No, it never is; it never was; it never will be. There is enmity to-day between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; and so there will be to the end of the chapter. You will never get anything out of the serpent, even though you stand and listen to his philosophical questions, and his new explanations of God's Word. You will get nothing more out of him now than mother Eve did when she got from him a curse to all her posterity. You can get no good out of the world, nor out of the prince of this world.

It is implied in our text, also, that *we cannot go and wallow in the world's filth.* If there is any man here who is a professor of religion, and who can go to-night and indulge himself in vice, or who can find himself at home with the world, well, he belongs to the world. Where you find your pleasure, there your heart is. Do not pretend to belong to the Church and to the world as well. I like the honesty of the man who finds that his life is not consistent with the life of Christ, and therefore gives up his profession; that is plain sailing. But do not pretend that you can wallow in the mire of open sin or secret sin, and yet belong to Christ, for that cannot be. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world's puddles.

In particular, *we must keep ourselves unspotted from the lepers of the world.* There is a certain number of leprous men in the world. You can tell them by their conversation; and sometimes you cannot help going very near where they are; but if you hear them cry, "Unclean!" just give them a very wide berth. I wish that Christians were more careful about this leprosy in the matter of books. As soon as ever you see that there is leprosy there, do not go and play with it, and examine it, and look at it. You will catch it if you are not careful. Keep clear of it; keep yourselves unspotted from the lepers of the world. "Well, that is easy enough," you say; perhaps it is not as easy as you think.

But, further, *we are to keep ourselves from all spots of the world when we have to mingle with it.* Notice, there are spots which come from your circumstances. Are you wealthy? Well, use your wealth for God; but mind that it does not spot you. There is a great deal of rust about riches. Mind that it does not eat into your soul as doth a canker. Are you poor? Does your poverty compel you to live in a very low neighbourhood, with people of grovelling tastes? Well, the poverty will not hurt you necessarily any more than the wealth will; but keep yourselves unspotted from it. You will need a deal of grace to live in some parts of London, and not be spotted even by the people who have apartments in the house where you live.

And not only will your circumstances be likely to spot you; but the favours and honours of the world will spot you. So you have received a degree, or you have had a rise in business, and the people all speak well of you, do they? And there is that thoroughly worldly lady who has a secret admiration for you. Well, well, well, be careful. Joseph had the favour of Potiphar and of Pharoah in Egypt; but he kept himself unspotted. Mind that the world's favour does not spot you. "Ah!" says one, "I don't get much of that; I get all frowns." Very well; persecution, slander, and frowning need not spot you; but they may, you know. There are many who cannot bear the cold atmosphere and biting frosts of persecution. Mind that you are not spotted in that way. Then we may be spotted, dear friends, in trade. I suppose that a man has good need to be wide awake in order to keep honest; a man can soon do a wrong thing in business by simple negligence; and unless he keeps both his eyes open, his very servants may be doing in his name that which will be injurious to the honour of their master. Dear friends, trade away all you can; go and prosper in it; but mind that you do not get spotted. Then there are politics; you know what party politics are. We are all trying to get in another set of maggots to eat the cheese; that is about all it amounts to; first turn out one lot, and then turn in another. It comes to little more than that. Even in the pursuit of really good matters of policy, do you know any Christian man who goes into politics who is the better for it? If I find such a man, I will have him stuffed if I can, for I have never seen such a specimen yet. I will not say, do not attend to politics; but I do say, do not let them spot you. Then there are the socialities of life. A man goes in with his neighbours, and he sits at their feast; the Saviour sat at a feast with a Pharisee. But mind that it does not spot you; it did not spot him, but it may spot you, so beware. And as to your ordinary conversation with men of the world any day, are you not conscious, when you go home at night, that you want washing? After shaking hands with a good many men of the world, and talking with them, do you not feel that you are apt to get spotted? And the literature, the common literature of the world, I do not mean that which we should censure, and condemn, and burn; but the common literature that is all around you, mind that it does not spot you, brethren.

If we would be spotless, *we must beware of the vanities and pleasures of the world, the thoughts and the tendencies of the world.* It is supposed to be something wonderful to see "the tendency of the age", "the current of the age", "the set of thought." It is all pollution, and nothing else. Instead of wishing to be abreast of it, I only desire to be abreast of it in stemming it, and, by opposing it, to drive it back. That is the only position for a Christian man. If you go with the current of the age, you are swimming the wrong way; for all that is of the world comes of evil even to this day. There is no change in the Scripture, and there is no change in the world. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. The current of human opinion always was, is, and will be, till Christ shall come, an evil current, that will bear you the wrong way if you yield to it.

I might thus enlarge, but I will not; and will only say that *we must*

keep ourselves unspotted from the sins of the world. What are they? Well, one of them is atheism. Keep yourselves unspotted from that horrible crime, hatred of Deity. Doubt of every kind is in the air; this is the day of doubt. Keep yourselves unspotted from the world's unbelief. This is the age of compromises; to many people, truth is not a matter of great importance nowadays, and principle is of no account. They snip and cut and mar the Scriptures as Jehudi cut the prophet's roll; they have no care as to what God has said. Avoid compromises, and be unspotted of the world. This is the age of trifling; there is more money spent in play to-day than ever was since the world began, unless it was that day in which God swept all away by the flood. Keep yourselves unspotted by the world. It is the age of hollowness and gigantic shams and bubbles. Be real; be true; keep yourselves unspotted from the world. This subject is endless. God give us grace to carry it out!

III. I must finish by noticing, in the third place, that the words in our text INSIST UPON CAREFUL SELF-WATCHING.

Do you see, it is your very person, your soul, your heart, your very self that is to be kept unspotted? What a man is, that the man before long does. But keep yourselves clean, unspotted, my brethren. Do you say, "O Lord, how can I do this"? It is plain from the text that I am not to sit down, and say, "The Lord will do it, the Lord will do it, and the Lord must do it; or else I cannot." The language of the text is such that it calls the Christian himself to watchfulness and care. What must he do, then?

Brethren, first, *let us go and wash.* We were washed once, many years ago. Jesus washed us, and made us clean. But now, to-day, we have been going through the world, and our feet have got bemired. Let us come to him again to-night, ere we go to rest. Dear Master, wash our feet again from any spots of the world which we have acquired by going along these dusty pathways! The fairest lily in the gardens near London gets spotted by the soot of this great city; you cannot help seeing its defilement; but the shower comes, and the dew falls, and the lily washes its fair face, and its loveliness is restored. Let us go to our Lord again to be washed in his precious blood. It is never supposed in the Scriptures that we shall be without sin to confess; but it is written, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." We still want cleansing, even when we are walking in the light. Let us get away to Christ, then, and say, "Lord, I would be myself unspotted; I come to thee for washing."

That done, *avoid careless walking* if you wish not to be spotted. In going home, after a shower, if you have to cross a road, it is very difficult to keep from being spotted; and if you run carelessly, you will plunge into a puddle, and there will be splashes of mud all over you, before you know it. Now, do not run into the puddle; walk circumspectly. There is a clean way, and it is called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it. The Lord help us to watch every action, and more than that, every thought and every word! I would like to be able to take my words out of my mouth,

and look at them before I speak them; and to have all the actions of my life done as under the watchful eye of God, to see whether they will look right in the day of judgment. If you cannot sleep over a thing, do not do it. As the good man said to his boy, "My boy, pay as you go." "Suppose I cannot pay, father." "Then, don't go;" so would I say to you, examine your life as you go. If you dare not examine an action, or look at it, then do not do it. When you do not know whether it is right, then it is always best to feel sure that it is wrong. Even though it might be right to another, it will be wrong to you, if you have not faith that it is right, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." If any question arises about moral conduct, that question makes it evil to you.

Next, I would say that, as you would avoid careless walking, also *avoid careless walkers.* Very frequently, when I am riding alone, and I am not getting into any mud, an omnibus comes by, and splashes me all over. It is no fault of mine; but then it is somebody near me that does it. As you walk along the street, you are very careful; but if your neighbour puts his foot in a puddle, the splash may come over you. So mind what company you keep. And when you find people getting rather "fast", or rather "loose", leave them; get away from them. You do not want to be bemired, so keep yourself unspotted from the world.

Above all, *cry to God to preserve you from evil.* If you go out every day, covered and protected by divine grace, then, and then only, can you be kept unspotted from the world. I would like to see a Christian, not kept in a glass case away from trial and temptation, but yet covered with an invisible shield, so that, wherever he went, he would be guarded and protected from the evil influences that are in the world in almost every place.

Thus I have spoken to God's people, and I have said very little to sinners; but, although I have not addressed them specially to-night, if you, the people of God, will go and live godly lives, you will preach to sinners better than I shall. I have to say to you who fear God, keep yourselves unspotted from the world; but what am I to say to those who are not only in the world, but also of the world? Do you not know that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up"? What will become of you then? And you who belong to the world, and have your portion in this life, and your joy in this world, in that great day when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, where will you be? Then you may call to the rocks to hide you, but you will call in vain. If your portion is in this life, what will you do in the life to come? Some of you are living within the boundaries of this mortal existence; and that is your all. Poor soul! Poor soul! Poor soul! Poor soul! The Lord of his mercy bring you to know the life eternal; and when you once get that, your great desire will be to be delivered from the power of sin, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen!

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JAMES I.

Verse 1. *James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.*

"Where are the lost ten tribes?" asks somebody. They never were lost. That is a mere piece of nonsense. There were, and there are still, twelve tribes of Israel, as much one as the other. Ask any Jew if it is not so. James writes to all his compatriots by nature, and to all the fellow-citizens of the saints by grace, and greets them. What a strange greeting it is!

2. *My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;*

Or "trials." Do not be sorry about it, be thankful for it. The gold should be glad to be put into the crucible; the Christian should rejoice to be tested and tried. Not only count it joy, but count it "all joy when ye fall into divers temptations."

3, 4. *Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

You need to grow; you will not grow without trials. You need to learn; you will not learn without affliction. It is God's school for you. Be thankful, therefore, when these afflictions come. They are the rumbling waggons of your Father, in which he sends you choice treasure. They are black ships that come from afar, loaded with precious things. But mind that you do get this patience; and that, when you have it, you have still more of it: "Let patience have her perfect work."

5. *If any of you lack wisdom,*

Ah, James, you need not say, "*If* any of you lack wisdom," for we all lack it! We are all poor, foolish creatures: "If any of you lack wisdom."

5. *Let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

The Lord might very well upbraid us for our folly, and say, "Poor child, I will give you wisdom; yet you are very foolish." But he does not say that: he "giveth to all men liberally; and upbraideth not." Let him who lacks wisdom ask of God: "and it shall be given him." Can the Lord give wisdom? Surely, we must study, learn, and gain experience before we can know, and then afterwards knowledge, rightly used, groweth into wisdom. Can God give us wisdom ready made? Oh, yes, he can! He gives wisdom if we ask for it.

6. *But let him ask in faith,*

A man who has no wisdom can have faith; let him use his faith to get wisdom with it: "Let him ask in faith."

6, 7. *Nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

He may receive something of the Lord; but he may not think that he shall. It may come as a spontaneous gift of sovereign grace; but we have no right to expect an answer to prayer when we pray in a wavering style.

8. *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

He sees double; he runs after two objects; and therefore he staggers across the street: he "is unstable in all his ways."

9. *Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:*

Being lifted up by the grace of God to sit among the princes of Israel.

10. *But the rich, in that he is made low:*

Hard work this! Still, the child of God should rejoice in it, for now that he is stripped of earthly things, he finds his all in God.

10—12. *Because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth: so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation:*

Or, "endureth trial." Blessed is the man who is tried and tested, and who lives through it; who conquers, notwithstanding all the battle and struggle through which he passes. We should say, "Blessed is the man who is not tried;" but it is not so. He who, bearing the heavy load, receives gracious strength to sustain him under it, gets a greater blessing than the man who escapes the burden.

12, 13. *For when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God:*

That would be nonsense, and falsehood. When a man is seduced to evil, when evil casts its attractive spell over him, let him not blame God.

13, 14. *For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

God tries men. God does not, in the sense in which the word is here used, tempt men. Satan tempts: God tries. But the same trial may be both a temptation and a trial; and it may be a trial from God's side, and a temptation from Satan's side, just as Job suffered from Satan, and it was a temptation; but he also suffered from God through Satan, and so it was a trial to him.

15. *Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

That is the pedigree of sin; it is born of lust, and it brings forth dust. Any sin, whatever it is, if we cling to it and love it, will bring forth death; rest assured of that. The only hope we can have of eternal life is by being parted from sin. That must be taken away from us; for there shall never enter into heaven anything that defileth. We have, from day to day, to fight against sin, till it is utterly put away from us.

16, 17. *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

God never turns from us; nor, in any way whatever, changes; he is the same God, ready always to bless us, ready to save us to-night as much as any other Thursday night. Ah, dear friends, what variableness we have! The other day we were frost-bitten, and crying out with the cold; and now to-night, perhaps, we feel dull, and stupid, and heavy, because it is so hot. Yet, what a mercy it is that God has no variableness, neither shadow of a turning; and we may come to him to-night, and say, "Lord, visit us as thou art wont to do! Revive us and refresh us. Put us into a lively, brisk, happy frame of mind to-night, and send us on our way rejoicing."

18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.*

We are his creatures, but we are better than his other creatures; for he has made us twice over. We are his twice-born creatures; and we are the first ripe fruit of his creation, dedicated to his praise, gathered to his glory: "a kind of firstfruits of his creatures." Oh, that God would help us to honour him, and to live truly consecrated to him!

19. *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear,*

It is a great thing to have an open ear. Some are very slow to hear, especially to hear the Word of God, and the voice of God speaking that Word. Oh, to have our ears unstopped, that we may hear every syllable of truth gladly, cheerfully, retentively! God grant us that swiftness of hearing to-night!

19. *Slow to speak, slow to wrath:*

For, sometimes, when men are very quick to speak, they are also very quick in other respects as well; and volubility may be accompanied by a tendency to heat or passion: "Slow to speak, slow to wrath."

20. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

Satan does not cast out Satan. Anger does not overcome evil. We may think we do well to be angry; but that will very seldom be the case.

21. *Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.*

Perhaps you have seen a man grafting a tree. What a gash he makes in the tree before he puts in the graft! How he wounds it to make the sap flow into the new wood! If the Lord has made any of your hearts bleed to-night by the sharp cutting of his Spirit, we are not sorry, if it shall the better prepare you for receiving the grafts of his own nature, and his own Word.

22. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

It is a pity when a man deceives himself; he must be an arch-deceiver.

23—25. *For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein,*

Perseverance to the end is wanted: "Continueth therein."

25. *He being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.*

The blessedness of true religion lies very much in the practical effect of it. Hearing is pleasant; but doing is the effectual proof of grace.

26. *If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain.*

James settles that matter off very peremptorily. An unbridled tongue indicates a godless heart.

27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.*

This is not the secret part of religion. Of that we read elsewhere. But this is the very dress that true religion puts on; charitably caring for the most destitute of our fellow-creatures, and holy walking, that we be not as the men of the world are: "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—668, 649, 670.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE BLESSINGS OF THE HEAVENLY CHARTER.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JUNE 25TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 16th, 1889.

"Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."—Job x. 12.

IT is well sometimes to sit down, and take a grateful review of all that God has done for us, and with us, from our first day until now. We must not be like hogs under the oak, that eat the acorns, but never thank the tree, or the Lord who made it to grow. We must not receive the dew, and yet never think of the heaven from which it comes. To be ungrateful, is to be unmanly; to be ungrateful to God, is to commit high treason against the majesty of his goodness. I think that an hour would be well spent, by any person here, in sitting quite alone, and going over his autobiography. Turn over the pages of your diary; if you have none written, turn over the pages of your memory, and think of all that God has done for you from the day when you hung upon your mother's breast until the present moment.

> "Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
> Call for songs of loudest praise."

But God does not hear the songs of praise because we let the streams of mercy glide by unnoticed. Far too often, we—

> "Let his mercies lie
> Forgotten in unthankfulness,
> And without praises die."

We do not even put a tombstone over their graves; but let them lie as dead things, uncared for, forgotten, out of mind.

If there is any time when it is unlikely for us to think of God's mercies, but when it would be specially wise for us to do so, if there is one time more unlikely than another, it is when we are in great

trouble. Here is poor Job, covered with sore boils, sitting on a dung-hill, scraping himself with a bit of a broken pot, with his children dead, his property destroyed, and even his wife not giving him a word of comfort, and his friends acting in a most unfriendly manner. Now it is that he talks to his God, and says, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." You are very ill; think of the time when you were well. You are poor; remember when you washed your feet in milk, and your steps with butter, and had more than heart could wish. Friends have forsaken you; recollect when you had plenty of friends. "Oh!" say you, "that will be rubbing salt into the wound." No, no, I trust not. You will remember that you were not always unhappy, that you were not always full of pain; God has spared your life, and given you many favours. If you do not feel that you can bless him for the present moment, yet forget not to bless him for the past; and when you once begin to do that, you will soon find that your praise will overlap the past, and cover the present, if it does not even run into the future. Only begin to praise God, and you will find that he who praises God for mercy will never be long without a mercy for which to praise him. I therefore invite those of you who are sad to-night to think of God's past goodness; and, as I trust that the larger proportion here will not be found in that condition, I urge you to lead the way in taking a happy retrospect to-night of all that God has done for you in providence and grace.

Job gives us here a charter with three blessings in it; "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." These are choice favours; as we dwell upon them, may our hearts gratefully bless God for all that he has done for us!

I. The first blessing of this heavenly charter is LIFE: "Thou hast granted me life."

Well, I think that *we ought to thank God that we have lived at all.* I know the pessimist version of the psalm of life is that, "'Tis something better not to be." Perhaps it would have been something better if that gentleman had not been, better, I should think, for his wife and family if they had not had to live with such a miserable creature. But the most of us thank God for our being, as well as for our well-being. We count it something not to be stones, or plants, or "dumb, driven cattle." We are thankful to be intelligent beings, with powers of thought, and capable of mental and spiritual enjoyment. Truly, O Lord, it is no small thing to be, even to be a man; for what is man? Well, with all his sin, yet as thou didst make him, when he had no sin, he was but a little lower than the angels, and thou didst make him to have dominion over all the works of thy hands. Thou hast made him immortal. Thou hast made him a king; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour: and if he does but know his destiny, and work it out aright, thou hast made him to be glorified with thyself: thou hast made him to stand even higher than the angels now that thou hast redeemed him, for he has tasted of a love which unfallen angels could not know. If you choose to make your being to be your eternal curse, why, you must do it, I suppose; but not without our tears; but if you are rational beings, and use your reason reasonably,

you will thank God that you live, and pray that your life may always be a blessing to you.

But *we also thank God that we have lived on in spite of many perils.* There are some here who ought very much to thank God that they live on after the perils through which they have passed. It was something to find ourselves alive after the terrible thunderstorm of the week before last. It is something to be alive after an earthquake, or a tremendous storm at sea, or to be alive in the midst of a pestilence, or alive after a battle, to be alive after some fearful accident, to be alive, I say, when there are so many gates to the grave.

> "The rising morning can't assure
> That we shall end the day;
> For death stands ready at the door
> To take our lives away."

And yet, despite all these things, we are still here. Some of you, not long ago, were very ill; it was thought that you would die; you thought so yourself, you were brought very low; and yet here you are. While others have died, you are still spared. You went hard by the gates of death, and seemed to look into eternity for a while; but you were allowed to pass on, and you are yet among the living, to praise God, as I hope you are doing this very day. Yes, it is God's grace that has granted us life. I find that, in the Hebrew, it reads, "lives", as if we had several lives, as though, if we had not had many lives, we should not have had any life at this moment. But life upon life has come to us, like wave upon wave at sea; and whereas one might have washed us on the shore of death, another has carried us back to the sea of life again, and still we live.

I am addressing some from whom our text asks for gratitude because *they are alive notwithstanding constitutional weakness.* Perhaps from a child you were always feeble. Oftentimes you have said to yourself, "How is it that I have lived? Strong and hearty men and women have died before me; and I, who have been always ailing, find that the creaking door hangs long on its hinges." Well, do not creak more than you can help; but bless God that you are not taken off the hinges. It is really very marvellous how some live even to old age when every day they seem to be on the very verge of departure. We account for their continued life by this fact, that they can say with Job, "Thou hast granted me life." Let us praise God, then, even if we can only do it with a feeble tongue, for it is something still to live.

And I am speaking to a great many here to whom this text should commend itself because *they have lived so long.* I suppose that, in no other place in London, or perhaps in the world, is there so large a number of old men and women gathered together as in this Tabernacle. One is often struck with the snow that lies about this place on the heads of so many. Do not blame us for getting old. We were all young together; and I remember that many here were introduced into the church as young men and young women. Nearly forty years ago they said of me, "He takes into the church a parcel of boys and girls." Well, they have been cured of that fault, if it was a fault, long ago; and now, perhaps, some will complain that they are old. We do not

complain; we are so much nearer heaven; but when I look upon some dear friends here, who have passed even their four-score years, who have quite run out their lease, and now are living upon sufferance, as I trust they may for years to come, and when I remember what a poor tottering fabric this tent-body of ours is, I am amazed that we still live on.

> "Our life contains a thousand springs,
> And dies if one be gone;
> Strange that a harp of thousand strings
> Should keep in tune so long."

Yet it has kept in tune so long, and we ought to bless God to-night, those of us who are somewhere between fifty and a hundred, and others who are somewhere between sixty and two hundred, ought to bless God to-night that they have been spared so long, and say, in the language of the text, "Thou hast granted me life and favour." You need not be frightened about that two hundred that I mentioned; you will not any of you be likely to reach that figure. If any of us live for a century, we shall have done exceedingly well; we may thank God if we do not live as long as that, for, while it is well to live here, it is better for us, after all, before our infirmities multiply, to be up and away to our Father's house above.

Think of this a little longer, "Thou hast granted me life." You have thought of the perils through which you have passed, and the weaknesses that you have survived. Now think, beloved friends, of *the sin which might have provoked God to make an end of such a guilty life.* Am I not speaking to some here who have lived without any thought of God, their Maker? Up till this time, God has fed you, and preserved you in being, and yet you have not even given him a thought. It is a wonderful thing that he should have spared your life in the midst of such wicked ingratitude. Perhaps, my friend,—I hope it is not so,—but perhaps you have been worse than this, and that mouth of yours has uttered blasphemies, and the members of your body have been given over to uncleanness. If you will look back to-night, it will be a wonder to you, that you, perhaps professedly an atheist, possibly a drunkard, it may be setting an ill example to wife and children, and doing evil on all sides, have been spared. One seems to say, "Cut down that upas tree, it drips with poison;" but God puts by the axe, and he still spares you. Did you not this very day imprecate a curse upon yourself, and yet the curse has not come? There was a tract that used to be given away, and which did much good; it was called, "The Swearer's Prayer." If every swearer would look upon his dreadful imprecation as a prayer, for such it is, he might well wonder that God has not, long ago, blasted him, as he has said, like some oak of the forest, that we have seen struck by lightning, standing there with its stag's-horn branches high in the air, a monument of what divine judgment can do. God has granted you life, yet nothing in that life has been pleasing to him, or good for your fellow-men. Thank him that he has not yet cut you down as a cumberer of the ground.

But even if I speak to the best man and woman here, to those who

have tried to be useful, and are endeavouring to be holy, yet, dear friends, what poor failures we are after all! There is not one of us who can boast; we have to lay our hands upon our mouths, and bow ourselves into the very dust. Truly, Lord, thou hast let us live, although we have done so little, and done that little so faultily; we can to-night praise thee, and each one say, "Thou has granted me life."

I might thus continue to show you that our preservation in life is a theme for great gratitude: "Thou has granted me life." But if we can say this in a higher sense, "Thou hast granted me life," *spiritual life*, how much greater should our gratitude be! I could not even feel the guilt of sin, I was so dead; but thou hast granted me life to repent. I could not look to Jesus as my Saviour, and find rest in him; but thou has granted me life to believe in him. Oh, what a mercy it is to have spiritual life! I do not like to ask you whether you have it; I do not think that that ever ought to be a matter of question with anybody. A man is either alive or dead, and he must know which he is; and however faint and feeble he may be, the very feeling of faintness and feebleness is a sign of life, for the dead man does not even feel that. If, to-night, you have only life enough with which to groan, to weep, and to cry to God, thank God for it, and say, "Thou hast granted me life;" but if you have that little life, do not be satisfied with it. Pray to have life more abundantly, that you may come to joy and peace through believing, that you may have the full assurance of faith, that you may be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might, that you may tread down sin, and may serve the Lord in your day and generation, and bring hundreds and thousands to Christ. Pray that it may be so; and then, as each single increase of power comes to you, sing, in the words of the patriarch, "Thou hast granted me life." Oh, for more life! Do you feel dull and dead to-night? Cry to God to grant you life. Cry for grace, and then, when it comes, gratefully say, "Thou hast granted me life."

II. The second blessing of this heavenly charter is DIVINE FAVOUR: "Thou hast granted me life and favour."

Have you ever thought of the many favours that God has bestowed upon you, even upon some of you who as yet have never tasted of his grace? What a favour it is to many to be *sound in body!* Dear friends are here to-night, who have not seen the light of the sun for many a day. God is gracious to them in their blindness; but do you not think that we ought to praise him for our eyesight? There are many beloved Christian friends, who used to sit on this lower platform, and around here, for although they were deaf, they could hear my voice in the preaching of the gospel, and with great sorrow they have come to me one by one, and said, "I cannot even hear with the trumpet now, I am getting so deaf." Bless God for your ears, if you still have the use of them; and take heed how you hear. Why, there is not a single faculty that God has given but what we ought to be thankful for it! When you see around you these who are crippled, those who are deprived of one limb or one sense, should you not say, "Thou hast granted me life and favour"? They have favours, too, for which to thank God; but you have this particular favour which is denied to them. Do not fail to thank the Lord for it. It is a great

mercy to have been born of good and honest parents, and not to be the inheritors of disease, as some are who are born to a life of sorrow by no fault of their own. Be grateful for your ancestry, young man, if you have sprung of good sound stock, and say, "Thou hast granted me life and favour." Do not go and give that body to the devil, I beseech you. Do not go and yourself plunge into vice and sin if God has restrained your ancestors from evil. By his grace, may you also be kept back, and enabled to say, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and I cannot sin against thy favour"!

I cannot help reminding you here of the great favour of God in the matter of *soundness of mind*. There is a dear friend, who has gladly heard the preaching of the gospel here, but now he has to be confined in an asylum, for it would be dangerous to have him at liberty. There is another, and we often meet with such, who seemed as cheerful and happy as any of us, but he has now sunk into deep despondency. I have often prayed God to let me go anywhere sooner than into an asylum. It seems so dreadful to lose one's reason. Be grateful that you have your senses. Surely you must be lunatics already if you do not bless God that you are not lunatics. There must be a madness in your heart if you do not thank him for sparing you from so terrible a trial. These favours are looked upon as very common things, a sound mind and a sound body; but if they were universal, they would still be mercies for which we ought specially to bless the name of the Lord.

I speak to many here to whom God has also given *a comfortable lot in life*. You work, and you work pretty hard; but still you are not starved, and you are not ground to death by forced labour. There are many in this house of prayer who ought to be very grateful for the easy circumstances in which they are found. Why am I talking about these things? Why, because I want, by stirring you up to gratitude, to bind you with cords of thankfulness to God! Will you not thank him who has done so much as this for you? If you were suddenly brought into the deepest poverty, and the most painful sickness, and did not know where to lay your heads, you would then reproach yourselves to think that, when your lives were cast in pleasant places, and you had a goodly heritage, you were not more grateful and more obedient to the God of love.

Some here, too, some few, at any rate, have been favoured with *much prosperity*. O self-made men, do not begin to adore yourselves because you made yourselves; for if you made yourselves, you are poor sticks, I know. I would not trust myself to make myself, I should make an awful mess of myself. No, thank God for your prosperity, and devote your wealth to his service, who granted it to you. Grow not purse-proud; be not exalted above measure among your fellow-men. The more you have, the more you owe to God; therefore be humble, and be devoted to him who has treated you with so much favour.

And I may say to-night that, in this congregation, God has given you the favour of *hearing the gospel;* no mean favour, let me remind you. Multitudes, multitudes, multitudes are without it, perishing for lack of knowledge; and there are some who once heard the gospel

who are now far removed from the sound of it. Friends who once used to join in our great assembly are now far away in those parts of South America where as yet there is no gospel teaching, or they are far away in the backwoods of America or Canada, or away in the bush in Australia, where, as yet, the message of mercy is not, at any rate, regularly brought to them; and they very much miss the means of grace. Be thankful that you have the gospel at almost every street corner; and if you are willing to hear it, you may hear it.

Still, putting all these things together, they do not come up to this last point, that many of us have received *the favours of saving grace:* "Thou hast granted me life and favour." The highest favours of all God has given to some of us, the favour of being chosen to be his from before the foundation of the world, the favour of being redeemed from among men, the favour of being called out by his effectual grace, the favour of being renewed in the spirit of our minds, the favour of justification, whereby we are made accepted in the Beloved, the favour of full, free, irreversible pardon, whereby our sin is blotted out for ever, the favour of a throne of grace, the favour of answered prayer, the favour of divine providence, which makes all things work together for our good, the favour of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, who is with us, and shall abide in us for ever. I cannot run over the list of God's favours to his people, for it is too long. Only praise your God, each one of you, as you say to-night, "Thou hast granted me life and favour." Happy people, thrice-happy people, of whom this is true! If we did not praise the Lord, the stones in the street might well cry out against us.

III. The last blessing of the charter, upon which I shall be a little longer, is DIVINE VISITATION: "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." Does God ever come to man? Does he not? Yes; but it is a great wonder: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that thou visitest him?"

May I remind some of you of how much you ought to praise God for his visitation? He visited you, first, *with an arousement and conviction of sin.* I remember when his Spirit came to me while I was yet a child, and made me feel a heavy burden on account of my childish sins. How I wept and cried, when alone, because I had been so guilty before God! And as a youth, that feeling still pursued me wherever I went. God visited me in the night, visited me often in the morning, when I woke up before anybody else, to read Baxter's "Call to the Unconverted", and Alleine's "Alarm", and such-like books, over which I pored again and again, feeling the evil of my sin, and having the sword of the Spirit piercing yet more deeply into my conscience at every page I read. I thank God for those early visitations. If any of you are having them now, quench not the Spirit of God. Be glad to know your real state as sinners while you are yet young. The visitations of God, in the form of conviction, if at first they bring us under bondage, are nevertheless of the utmost value, for by these he preserves our spirit.

After that first experience, there came visitations of *enlightenment and conversion.* Can you remember when Jesus first visited you, and brought you up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay?

Does not your heart leap within you even now as you are ready to sing,—

"Happy day! Happy day!
When Jesus washed my sins away"?

Yes, God's visitations, by revealing Christ to your broken heart, preserved your spirit.

Perhaps since then you have had visitations of another kind. You have had *chastisement*, or you have had *affliction* in the house. God's visitations are sometimes very unwelcome. We dread that he should come to afflict or chastise us; and yet, in looking back upon all such experiences, I think that you can say, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." I saw a young sister, just before this service; and I said to her, "When did you find the Lord?" She replied, "It was when I was very ill." Yes, it is often so; God makes us ill in body that we may have time to think of him, and turn to him. "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." What would become of some people if they were always in good health, or if they were always prospering? But tribulation is the black dog that goes after the stray sheep, and barks them back to the Good Shepherd. I thank God that there are such things as the visitations of correction and of holy discipline, to preserve our spirit, and bring us to Christ.

But then, dear friends, we have had other visitations, visitations of *revival and restoration*. Do you not sometimes get very dull and dead? Then you are glad to go and hear a sermon, or you read some godly, soul-stirring book, or you meet with some Christian friend, and you say afterwards, "Well, I do not know how it is, but I seem quite different from what I was; I have made a new departure, I have started off again." I think that some of our friends have need to do that to-night; it will not hurt any of us if we all seem to begin again to-night, and take Jesus Christ into our heart once more, and let him come as he came at the first, and be like a new Christ to us. Let us joy and rejoice in him with our first love and our early delights. Lord, give us that visitation to-night, and revive our spirits! Oh, what visitations of joy he sometimes gives us when he comes very near to us! We do not hardly know how to bear it; we cry when the vessel gets quite full, "Hold, Lord, I cannot bear more of joy." "Ah!" say you, "we do not know much about that experience." Do you not? Then, pray the Lord to visit you often, that you may know more about it.

The best of all is, *when the Lord visits us, and never goes away;* but stays with us always, so that we walk in the light of his countenance, and go from strength to strength, singing always, "Thy visitation never ended, daily continued, preserves my spirit." You have all heard the phrase, generally used by juries at a coroner's inquest, when a man has died suddenly, "Died by the visitation of God." No doubt some do thus die; but I want you to live by the visitation of God. That is a very different thing, and that is the only way in which we truly can live, by God's visiting us from day to day, so preserving our spirit from the dangers that surround us. Live, then, by the visitation of God.

You are sick, my friend; your heart is sick. Sin, like a grievous

disease, is destroying you. The cancer of an evil habit is eating into your very vitals. What is to be done with you? Nothing but that Jesus Christ the Lord should come and give you a gracious visitation, come and look you in the face, and feel your pulse, and lay his hand on your heart, and change it, and make you a new creature; and he will do all that if you send for him. Doctors have a night-bell, you know, and a night-tube, by which they may be called in cases of urgency. Now ring God's night-bell at once, and speak up that tube of prayer, "Lord, I am sick unto death; come and heal me. Come and heal me." Will not somebody in these pews now, without the use of a word, yet say in the silence of his heart, "Lord, I am sore vexed; I am sick unto death with sin; come and heal me"? and Jesus Christ will say, "I will come and heal you." Then will you say, "Thy visitation hath preserved my spirit."

You know how a farm will sometimes get smothered with weeds, and things seem to go all wrong. What is the matter? On enquiry, you find that the farmer has been out on the Continent, he has been away from his farm. Well, then, of course the farm goes wrong; but have him back again, and the farmer's eye does more than his hand; his foot manures the ground wherever he stands; and things soon get on better. Now, if the farm of your nature has fallen into a bad state, you want the Husbandman back; you need the Lord Jesus to come and survey the estate, and give directions as to what is to be done to it. He will soon set the whole place to rights. Yea, if your farm has become like a desert, bare as the palm of your hand, he can come and turn it to fertility; he can make the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of the Lord. A visitation from the Lord Jesus Christ is what we all want when we are barren and dead.

May we expect it? Yes, he came on a visit here once. We did not see him when he came, but there were some who saw him. You remember how George Herbert quaintly sings of his laying aside his azure mantle, and making the sky with it; and taking off his bright rings, and hanging them up as stars.

> "He did descend, undressing all the way,
> And when they asked what he would wear;
> He smiled, and said as he did come,
> He had new clothes a-making here below."

And poor clothes they were, when he was born of the Virgin, and lived in our inferior clay. He paid us a visit, but men did not let him lodge comfortably. There was no room for him in the inn. It was a sorry entertainment that they gave him, for they pierced his side ere he went away, and he carried with him the marks in his hands and feet that he had received in the house of his friends. Well, but still, having once come, and died on this earth, he knows the way; and as he cannot die again, he will come again; and now, to-night, in spirit, by his Spirit, he will come to you, if you only cry to him, "Come." If you cry to him, "Come," to-night, that will be only the echo of what he says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden." He cries, "Come," catch up that word, and say, "Come." Echo his "Come" by your own "Come"; and you two will meet before

the service is over, though we have reached the last few minutes of it. May your "Come" and Christ's "Come" blend in one! Come, Lord Jesus, even so, come quickly, and set thy poor servants free from the taint of sin, and from the dread of the wrath of God! Yes, you want a visitation from him who has come already; and beside that, he has sent his Holy Spirit to abide until he himself descends from heaven with a shout. The Holy Ghost is here in this assembly now; plead and cry to him for his visitation.

And if my Lord will come anywhere to-night, it is to you who think yourselves unfit for him to come to you, to you who would give your eyes to have him, but scarcely dare to hope that he will ever come to you. The Lord says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Do you not belong to that kind of people, trembling at God's Word, wishing only that you dared to hope in his mercy? Come now, and cast yourselves on Jesus; come now, and trust yourselves with the great Saviour, who has ascended on high, to give repentance and remission of sins, and who is ready to give both the repentance and the remission to every soul that is willing to have them. If you would have them, they are yours. Believe for eternal life. Believe now. The Lord grant you such a visitation that you may be constrained to believe, for Jesus' sake! Amen and Amen.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALMS VI. AND VIII.

Psalm vi. Here the psalmist asks for a visit from God, for he is sick at heart, heavy and depressed. Be very thankful if that is not your case; but if it is, be very grateful that here is a prayer ready-made for you. Here you are taught how to cry to God, and what to expect from him. If you are very sick and sad, you are not worse off than David was. Send for David's Physician; you cannot have a better doctor than the royal Physician. He who waited on King David is prepared to wait on you.

1. *O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,*

"Rebuke me; it will do me good; I need it; but not in anger. Be gentle and tender with me: 'Rebuke me not in thine anger.'"

1. *Neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.*

"Chasten me; it may be that the rod will be very curative to me; but let not the chastening be given in thy hot displeasure. Be not very angry with thy poor sinful servant. If thou dost not turn away thy rod, yet turn away thy wrath. It is a sweet prayer. Some people cry to God about their sickness; it is much better to cry to God about the cause of it; that is to say, if it be a chastisement for sin, get rid of the sin, and the rod will then be removed.

2. *Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.*

"Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak." This was a sweet reason for David to urge: "For I am weak." He could not say, "For I am worthy." He would not have dared to say that. He could not say that when he said, "Have mercy," for mercy is for the unworthy. Justice is for the good; mercy is for those who are guilty. "Have mercy upon me, O

Lord; for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed." Plead the greatness of your disease as a reason for the remedy. Do not come with your self-righteousness; that will hinder you. Come with your sorrow and your sin, your weakness and your pain, and plead these before God.

3. *My soul is also sore vexed:*

That is worse than the bones being vexed. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

3. *But thou, O LORD, how long?*

There is the pith of the prayer. David is troubled because God is away from him; he has lost communion with his Lord; he has got out of fellowship with his God, and here comes the most necessary cry of all:—

4. *Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.*

Will not that prayer suit you who are here to-night, you who are full of sin, and are heart-broken about it, and dread the wrath to come? I put this prayer into your mouths, and pray the Holy Spirit to put it into your hearts: "Oh save me for thy mercies' sake."

5. *For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?*

As much as to say, "If thou lettest me die, thou wilt lose one singer out of thy earthly choir; but if thou wilt let me live, I will remember thee; I will praise thee; I will give thee thanks." Do you feel like saying to-night, "Lord, if thou shalt destroy me, thou wilt gain nothing by it; but if thou wilt save me, there will be one who will give thee thanks for ever"? I have told you sometimes of that old woman who said, "If the Lord does save me, he shall never hear the last of it." And you and I can also say that if he saves us, he shall never hear the last of it; we will praise him throughout eternity for his great salvation.

6. *I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.*

David was in a very sorry case when he wrote these words. So great was his pain, so acute his sorrow, that all the sluices of his eyes were pulled up, and he seemed to float his bed in tears, and to be like George Herbert when he wrote:—

> "O who will give me tears? Come, all ye springs,
> Dwell in my head and eyes: come, clouds and rain:
> My grief hath need of all the watery things,
> That nature hath produced. Let every vein
> Suck up a river to supply mine eyes,
> My weary, weeping eyes, too dry for me,
> Unless they get new conduits, new supplies,
> To bear them out, and with my state agree."

7. *Mine eye is consumed because of grief;*

He had almost wept his eyes out; they grew red with his weeping, so that he could not see.

7. *It waxeth old because of all mine enemies.*

His eyesight grew dim, like that of an old man. A cataract of grief had put a cataract of blindness into his eyes.

8. *Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;*

He wants his God to come to him, so he bids God's enemies clear out. If we keep company with the wicked, we cannot invite God to our house, and expect him to come. "Depart from me," says David, "all ye workers of iniquity." "You who are singing what you call a jolly song, be off with

you. You who are merry with your jokes against religion, begone far from me."

8. *For the* LORD *hath heard the voice of my weeping.*

"And if he has heard my tears, I do not want you to be here. I cannot associate with God's enemies now that he has heard the voice of my weeping." Is not that a beautiful expression, "The voice of my weeping"? Why, there was no sound, was there? Yet there are songs without words, and there are voices without sounds.

9. *The* LORD *hath heard my supplication; the* LORD *will receive my prayer.*

"I thought at first that he would not take my petition; but I see he stretches out his right hand, he receives my prayer; and if he receives my prayer, I shall soon receive his answer."

10. *Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.*

Now let us read the eighth Psalm, in which David expresses great wonder that God, whom he had asked to visit him, should deign to do so. I think I see him sitting with his window open. It is night, and he is feeling better; and he bids them throw open the window, and he sits and looks at the stars, glad of the cool, fresh air.

Psalm viii. Verse 1. *O* LORD *our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.*

They are very high, but thy glory is higher than the heavens.

2—4. *Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

He, whose voice rolls the stars along, who makes those bright worlds to fly like sparks from the anvil of his omnipotence, how can he stoop so low as to regard his fallen creature, man, who is so small, so insignificant?

5, 6. *For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:*

Man is God's viceroy. He reigns over God's works in God's name. Let him not set up to be a king, and try to usurp the honour of his great Lord, the Imperator, the Universal Governor.

7, 8. *All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.*

What a king man is! Let him not be cruel to the beasts of the field; let him not be a tyrant; God did not make him for that purpose. Let his reign be generous and kind; and if the animals must suffer, yet spare them as much suffering as possible. O man, be thou a generous viceroy, for thou art under a most generous King, who is himself the happy God, and who delights in the happiness of all his creatures!

9. *O* LORD *our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*

Thus does the psalmist finish as he began the psalm, by praising the name of the Lord.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—214, 709, 103 (Version III).

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

PAUL APPREHENDED AND APPREHENDING.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 2ND, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, May 30th, 1889.

"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians iii. 12.

OBSERVE the apostle's condition when he wrote these words. I do not think that either you or I will be found to be in a better one. If any are, or think they are, I would suggest a question. I, for my part, would be satisfied to be just as Paul was.

He was in a position of conscious safety; he was a saved man, he knew that he was saved, for he rejoiced in Christ Jesus, and had no confidence in the flesh. He knew that he was justified by faith in Christ Jesus, and he counted all his own works, which formerly were his ground of trust, to be as dross and dung, that he might win Christ. He was a saved man, and he knew it. I do not think that he often had doubts about that point; but yet he was in a state of conscious imperfection: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." He had not yet reached his own ideal of what a Christian might be. He had not yet obtained from Christ all that he expected to obtain. He was not sitting down to rest and be thankful; but he was still hurrying on, reaching after something which was yet beyond him. He could not say, "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast much goods laid up for many years;" but he felt his own spiritual poverty still, and he cried, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." But, beloved, let not that thought be any kind of solace to you, for I would remind you that, though consciously imperfect, Paul was zealously making progress. He says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." I know many who say that they are imperfect, and they seem to be quite satisfied to be so. That was never the case with the apostle; as long as any trace of a sinful nature or a sinful tendency remained in him, it made him cry out, "O wretched man

that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It was not because he was dead in sin that he cried in that way. It would be a new thing in this world for a sinner dead in sin to cry so; but because he was already largely delivered from sin, and the reigning power of it had been broken, therefore he felt the burden of any sort of contact with sin. A man who is in the sea, deep down under the water, taking a plunge, does not feel the weight of the water; but bring him out on the shore, put a great tub of water on his head, and see what a weight that is to him. So, while a man is in sin as his element, it is no burden to him; but when he is out of it, and not under its power, then he feels the weight of it, he grows weary under it, and would fain be rid of every particle of it. The apostle, I say, was conscious of imperfection, but he was also conscious that he was making progress, that he was running towards a mark, that he was leaving much behind him, and was pressing toward that which was before him. He was also in a state of anxious aspiration. He desired that he might be found in Christ, that he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead, that he might, in a word, grasp that for which Christ had grasped him. I am going to talk about that double grasp to-night: "That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

Notice that there are two forces here mentioned, which are at work in every gracious man. There is Christ's power by which he apprehends us, and then there is the new power, the new life of God-given faith, by which we, in our turn, seek to apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended us. Christ has apprehended us for a purpose; we wish to realize that purpose even to the full. That is the intent of the apostle's words. Let us consider them in detail.

I. First, let us think of PAUL'S APPREHENSION BY CHRIST JESUS.

We do not often use the word "apprehended" now, in the sense in which it is here used. The only instance that I remember is, when we speak of a policeman apprehending a person, that is, laying hold upon him, seizing him.

At his conversion, *Paul had been apprehended by his Lord.* Take the word "apprehend" in the sense of arresting him, and it stands true of Saul of Tarsus. I need not repeat the story; you all know how that desperate rebel was going down to Damascus, to persecute the saints of God. Nothing was further from his mind than the thought of becoming a Christian; but while he was riding the high horse, and Damascus lay below him, just like a sheep within reach of a wolf, the Lord Jesus Christ stepped in, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

> "Thus the eternal counsel ran,
> 'Almighty grace, arrest that man!'"

And almighty grace did arrest him. He fell to the earth at the first blow; he was blinded with the second; nay, not so much by a blow as by the greatness of the light that shone round about him; and there he lay prostrate, broken in heart and blind in eye, and he had to be led into the city, and one of those poor men whom he had determined to hale to prison, had to come, and pray for him, that his eyes might be opened, that he might be baptized, and that he might thus

make his confession of faith in Christ. He well says that he was "apprehended of Christ Jesus." The King sent no sheriff's officer to arrest him; but he came himself, and took him into divine custody, laid him by the heels for three days in the dark, and then let him out into glorious liberty, an altogether changed man, to go forth to preach that faith which aforetime he had sought to destroy.

You may not all be able to remember any special day when you were apprehended by Christ; but some of us do. We remember when we, who had been formerly carried captive by the devil at his will, found ourselves arrested by One stronger than Satan. We did manage, by divine grace, to escape from the clutches of the devil; but we could not escape from that dear pierced hand when once it was laid upon us. We surrendered ourselves prisoners; there was no resisting any longer when his mighty grace came in to arrest us. I say that some of us remember that day. Other days, notable for great events, have been forgotten; but the day when we were apprehended of Christ Jesus is stamped upon our memory, and always must be, even throughout eternity.

Since then, dear friends, we have always felt that grip, just as *Paul ever felt himself in Christ's grasp.* We have never got away from that one arrest. It was not the work of a few minutes, and to be remembered, but to be then ended, and all over. No; at this moment we feel the same divine hand upon us; we are prisoners this day unto Christ, who alone hath set us free by capturing us. There was a legend, among the heathen of old times, that if persons saw certain spirits in the wood, they became, from that moment, wonderfully changed; they became possessed by the spirit which they saw. They had, as we say in our language, a twist. I remember when—

> "I saw One hanging on a tree,
> In agonies and blood,
> Who fix'd his languid eyes on me,
> As near his cross I stood;"

and I have had a twist ever since. I never got over it, and never expect to; I hope that twist will get more and more powerful hold over me. It turned everything upside down; it changed the right into the left; it made the bitter sweet, and the sweet bitter; the light darkness, and the darkness light. It was a wonderful twist; and, as I say again, that twist continues still; where it has once been experienced, there is no escaping from it. We can say, not only, "I was apprehended," but as the text has it, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He still binds us with the fetters of his love; we still sit at his dear feet, enthralled by his beauties; we are still under the omnipotent fascination of his altogether lovely face. We could not depart from him if we would; and we would not if we could. If we went away from Christ, to whom should we go? He has the words of eternal life. His love holds and binds us faster than fetters of brass. We must for ever be apprehended by Christ Jesus our Lord.

Now, beloved, *this arrest of Paul by Christ was the force and motive of his whole after life.* Because Paul had been apprehended by Christ, he began to live differently from what he had ever lived before. He

had an apprehension that he had lived amiss. He had an apprehension that his evil life would end in eternal destruction. He fled away from all his apprehensions of the wrath to come, to the Christ who had apprehended him in quite another sense. He had thus been apprehended, pressed into the service of Christ, and made by that pressure to become a volunteer, for here there is a paradox; all Christ's soldiers are pressed men and volunteers, too. There are two senses, the one in which grace constrains them, and the other in which their will, being made truly free, runs delightfully after Christ. But having once been apprehended, the apostle never shook off Christ's grasp; but he began to live as an apprehended man. He said to himself, "I cannot follow the world; for Christ has apprehended me. I cannot go after false doctrine; for Christ has apprehended me, and crucified me with himself. I cannot cease to preach the gospel; I cannot become a self-seeker; I cannot do anything but live for him who died for me, for the Master has apprehended me. He has put me under parole to keep close to him for ever; and I must not, cannot, dare not, would not, leave him. I am his apprehended one henceforth and even for ever."

I want your hearts to talk over this first part of the sermon. Never mind my faltering tongue; let your own hearts speak. If Christ has never apprehended you, well then, you have nothing to do with this matter, and you may leave it alone; but if he has arrested you, own the soft impeachment to-night. Say in your heart, "Yes, he has indeed laid hold on me, and my heart's desire is that he would bring every thought into captivity to him. From henceforth I would be led in triumph by him, his captive all the days of my life, to show the power of his illustrious love, the victories of his grace." Oh, that we might each one say with Paul, "I am apprehended of Christ Jesus"!

Ah, dear souls, you who have never been apprehended of him, I hope that you will be to-night! I pray God that you may run away from your old master the devil, and not give him even five minutes' notice, but just start off directly; and while you are a runaway slave, may my divine Master come, and lay his hand upon you, and say, "You are mine; you never did really belong to your old master; and even though you promised and swore that you would be his, thus saith the Lord, 'Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.' I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine; and now I only take what I bought on the tree. I take by power, by might, by main force, by grace, what I purchased with the blood of my hands and feet and heart. I will have thee, for thou art mine." Lord, do thou thus arrest some sinner to-night, to the praise of the glory of thy grace!

II. Now let us notice PAUL'S DESIRE TO APPREHEND THAT FOR WHICH THE LORD HAD APPREHENDED HIM.

Well, why did Christ apprehend Paul? First, it was *to convert him completely*, to make a new man of him, to turn him from all his old ways and pursuits, and put him on quite a different road. Now, brothers and sisters, that is why the Lord apprehended us, to make us new creatures in Christ Jesus. Let us pray God to carry out that design to the full, to make us altogether new creatures. Do not let us

be satisfied while there are any remains of the old nature; let us cry to the Lord to drive the Canaanites out; and though they have chariots of iron, let us, by divine grace, drive them all out. Pray, "Lord Jesus, thou hast come to turn me from every sin; turn me, and I shall be turned. Thou hast provided medicine for every disease; Lord, heal me, and I shall be healed." Do not be satisfied, any of you, with half a conversion. I am afraid that there are a great many who have not much more than half a conversion. I know a man; I hope he is converted, but I wish that the Lord would convert his temper. He prays very nicely; but you should see him when he is red in the face with anger at his wife. I know a man; I hope he is a Christian, it is not for me to judge; but I wish that the Lord would convert his pocket. It needs a button taken off, for it is very difficult to get it open. It is very easy to put anything in, but hard to get anything out for any good purpose. I know a great many professing Christians who do not seem to have had what we might call a thorough conversion. We want the power, which has arrested us, to do its work completely, till there is not any part of us but what has been renewed by grace, and sanctified to the service and glory of God. Brethren, seek to apprehend that for which Christ has apprehended you, namely, a thorough conversion, a turning of yourself from every evil way.

But the Lord apprehended each one of his people, in the next place, *to make them like to Christ.* This is the great design of electing love: "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." That is the great object of the very first act of divine love; and whatever the Holy Spirit does in us, he does it with this aim, to make us like unto the Firstborn among many brethren. This will be our satisfaction in eternity: "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Come, then, beloved, if Christ has arrested us to make us like himself, let us not rest till we have become more like him. Perhaps the Lord has made you like Christ in some respects, but not in all; or if you are like Christ in all respects, yet the likeness is dim, shadowy, rather in outline than in filling-up. Though we may be likenesses of Christ, there is not one of us who does not need many touches before we shall be good likenesses. Some, I fear, are caricatures of Christ. May the Lord have pity upon us if that is the case, and go on with his work, and take out all the blotches and blemishes, and paint the true portrait, till at last everybody who sees us will say, "There is Christ in that man; he is a likeness of Christ"! We may not all be paintings on ivory; we may not all be taken on a sheet of silver; but the Lord's portrait, even though it be on a piece of clay, has still great beauties in it. And as he intends to make us like Christ, O beloved, let us aspire to this! Come, get it into your voice, and get it into your heart! You are to be like Christ; and as you are to be so, and this is the very reason why Christ has arrested you, pine after it, thirst after it, labour after it. Trust God to work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure; and while he is doing that, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, because it is God that worketh in you.

If you turn to Paul's description of his own conversion, which he gave to Agrippa, you will find that the Lord said to him that he had

appeared to him *to make him a witness* of that which he had seen, and of that which he would afterwards reveal to him. So, in the third place, we have been apprehended of Christ that we may be witnesses for him, first seeing a great deal, and then telling what we have seen, which is the other sense of the word "witness." A witness sees or hears, and then he tells in court what he has seen or heard, and so he becomes a witness to others as once he was a witness to himself. Now, the Lord has apprehended every Christian here, to see his Saviour, to see his grace, to see his love, to see his power, to see all the wonders which the Holy Spirit works among men, and then to go and talk of these things to others, that they also, hearing from the lips of a witness, may be led to believe by the power of the Holy Spirit. Beloved, if the Lord Jesus Christ has apprehended you that you may be a witness, be on the look out, keep your eyes open; see all that you can see. Every prophet of olden times was called a seer. You cannot prophesy to others until you have been a seer yourself. Pray that you may see all that is in the Word. Cry, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Pray that you may see the movements of God in providence, and may see the hand of God in your own heart, and your own experience. Pray God first to make you a witness, an observer; and then tell out to others what you have tasted and handled and felt of the Word of life, and be a faithful witness for your Lord and Master all your days. Do not some professing Christians, who are here to-night, feel a little uncomfortable? You have not yet seen all that you should see; and have you not kept very much to yourselves what you have seen? I would that you could apprehend that for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus, seeing what he means you to see, and then telling out what he means you to tell. The Lord instruct us more and more, that we may fulfil all his good pleasure!

But, next, we were converted in order *to be the instruments of the conversion of others*. Paul, when he was speaking to Agrippa, expressly mentioned how the Lord said, "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." So, you see, there was a certain number of souls for whom Paul was apprehended, that he might be the instrument of their salvation. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." Now, that power Christ distributes among his people. There is a certain number of persons who will receive eternal life through my ministry; there is a certain number who will receive eternal life through another man's ministry. I wonder how many have, in this way, been appointed to you, that you might be the means of their salvation. You were not saved that you might go to heaven alone; you were saved that you might take others there with you. In the olden days, when a man wanted pigeons, he used to take a dove of his own, and smear its wings all

over with perfume, and then, when it was very sweet to smell, he threw it up into the air, and it went into other dovecots, and all the pigeons were after it; and when it came back, it brought them home to its master. That was a roguish trick; but it is a blessed method of bringing poor flying doves to Christ. When your wings are sweet with Christ's love, when every time that you move you perfume the air with holiness and mercy and grace, others will flock around you, and fly with you like doves to their windows. I like to think of the many that God has appointed me to bring to him. I cannot tell you how many I have met during the past week; they have made my heart dance for joy. Last Tuesday, when we had a large company of deacons of our Metropolitan Churches here, one would steal up to me, as I sat there shaking hands, and say, "On such a day, I heard you preach from such a text. I was a careless young man; but you brought me to the Saviour." Another would come and say, "God bless you, sir! I remember when you were the means of leading me to the Saviour." One took my hand with a ferocious grip, and could not say a word till he had shed many a tear. These things make us very happy; and my heart's desire is that I may get all that Christ means me to get, that I may apprehend all that for which he apprehended me. I want every Christian brother and sister here to feel the same. There is somebody in the world whom you have to bring to Christ. I do not know where he is, or who he is; but you had better look out for him. Come, seek now. Say, "I would not lose a single pearl, though it lies deep under the waves of the sea, if my great Lord intends me to dive for it, and bring it up into the light." Get to your searching after the hidden treasures, and be intent day and night, in the power of the Spirit, that you may apprehend that measure of usefulness for which you were apprehended of Christ Jesus. It will be a high honour to appear at last as a winner of souls. Kings might doff their diadems, and forget that they ever wore them, in comparison with that crown which God will give to those who turn many to righteousness, for they shall shine "as the stars for ever and ever." Aspire to this, my dear friends, and lose nothing of that for which you have been apprehended of Christ Jesus your Lord.

In the Acts of the Apostles we read that the Lord said to Ananias about Paul, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake." Well, now, some of you were apprehended on purpose *that you might suffer for Christ's sake.* Did I see you wince at that word? Well, but if usefulness by labour is an honour, usefulness by suffering is a still greater honour. In heaven, the brightest crown that any saint wears is that which is set with the rubies of martyrdom. When I have read the stories of those holy men and women who died in Roman amphitheatres, or were burned to death over at Smithfield yonder, I must confess that I have envied them. To preach Christ seems so little compared with having grace enough to suffer for his name's sake. As one reads of their intense suffering, one naturally shrinks from it, and says, "I thank God that I am not called to endure that trial;" but yet, if we were called to it, we should have grace given to us to bear it. What an honour it was for them, for

the sake of the Prince of martyrs, the Leader of the sacramental hosts of God's elect, to be able and willing to give themselves up to death! Well, you may be called to suffer for Christ's sake; at any rate, you are called to this, to lay your all upon his altar, to devote yourself, your substance, all that you are, and all that you have, to his honour and glory. You are apprehended of Christ Jesus for this purpose; try to apprehend it. Oh, brothers, let us resolve to live wholly unto Christ! Let us bid him take hands, and feet, and heart, and eye, and brain, and every faculty of our being. May God get as much glory as he can out of us, or reflect as much of his glory as is possible through even our weakness and infirmities! But this is why we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus, that we may be wholly and alone the Lord's: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died, and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Here is the prize of your high calling; are you ready to run for it? God help you to do so, to apprehend, in personal self-sacrifice, all that for which Christ has apprehended you!

But that is not all. Paul said that he regarded himself as having been arrested by Christ *that he might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead.* Oh, when that trumpet peals out, and the righteous arise, shall I arise; or shall I lie rotting in the tomb another thousand years? And when he calls his saints together, when—

> "East and west, and south and north,
> Speeds each glorious angel forth,
> Gathering in with glittering wing
> Zion's saints to Zion's King;"

shall we be there? Shall we behold the splendour of Christ's appearing? Shall we sit upon the throne with him, judging mankind? Shall we be for ever with the Lord? It is for this that we are apprehended. Are you getting ready for this? Are you preparing, by his grace, for that eternal future? I believe that all the saints will get to heaven; but every saint ought to aspire, not only to get there, but to carry there with him that which will make his heaven more glorious to God than it otherwise would be. Part of the joy of heaven will be to remember what the Lord did by us. We are not going there to go to bed for ever; we are going there to do some glorious work for Christ. How does he describe it? He says that, if his servants have been faithful and diligent, he will say to one, "Have thou authority over ten cities," and another shall be ruler over five cities. As we have proved our ability, such will be the dominion that Christ shall give us throughout the ages to come; and a little failing to-day, as it were the loss of a penny, may mean the loss of thousands of pennies in the world to come. You shall be as full as the greatest vessel; but you shall have smaller capacity. Look to that matter now. I believe that every action in this mortal life thrills through eternity. Time and eternity are like one tremulous mass of jelly; if you touch one particle of it here, it trembles right through, and right throughout the ages. Not a word is spoken but the echo of it shall

be heard when time shall be no more. Not a deed is done that dies, especially the deeds of quickened men and women. They know not what they do; they will be astonished to find, at the last great day, what they have done, for the Lord will evidently surprise his people when he says, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink." They will say, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?" And if you apprehend to the full the great purpose of Christ in apprehending you, though it is not of debt, but of grace; not of works, but of faith; yet, in the ages to come, you shall be surprised to find how the little that you did shall bring you great reward. God gives his people good works, and then rewards them for them. He works in us to will and to do, and then we will and do, and he gives us a reward for willing and doing.

I wish, dear friends, that in heaven we might feel, "Well, I did as God helped me. I apprehended that for which my Master apprehended me." You have no idea what you are going to do in glory. I expect one day to preach to an assembled universe concerning my Lord and Master, to tell to principalities and powers what Christ has done; not to sit with a lot of you good people, some listening to me, and some perhaps not; but to have angels, and principalities, and powers to be my congregation; and I want to learn to preach well here that they may be attentive to me. Each one of you who has served your Lord shall be a monument of his love and his mercy, and the angels shall stop and read what is inscribed on you. Oh, that there might be some good letters written on you, that when Gabriel stops to read, he may clap his hands, and then fly with swifter flight, as he says, "Bless the Lord for what he did for that poor man, for what he wrought in that poor woman! His grace is conspicuous there." As you are to be seen throughout all eternity, may you be fit to be seen! May the Lord, of his grace, work in you that which shall be to the praise of his glory!

III. I have done when I just take a minute or two to show THE LESSONS WHICH PAUL IS TEACHING US BY THIS TEXT.

The first is this, *make sure of your apprehension by Christ Jesus*, so that you can talk like Paul about it, "That for which I am apprehended." Pray the Lord that you may feel his hand on your shoulder, that you may feel his grace in your heart, his blessed fetters on your feet, his divine manacles upon your wrists. Pray that you may have no doubt about it; but may know of a surety that the Lord has arrested you.

This being known, *do not let it make you idle.* Do not say, "Christ has arrested me; I am saved; nothing more is needed." No. For what has he arrested you? He has a purpose in it. That arrestment was but the beginning of a great life-work. Let it not make you idle; but let it be your encouragement. If Christ has arrested you to be holy, he will make you holy. If Christ has arrested you for usefulness, be confident in seeking it. If Christ has arrested you to make you an eternal monument of his grace, believe that you will be, and press forward to the mark for the prize of your high calling.

Finally, *let this lead you to hope for the salvation of others.* Go forward

hopefully in your service for others. Teach that Sunday-school class with a firm belief that you were apprehended on purpose that John and Tom might be converted. Go and teach the girls, and say, "I was apprehended to bring Mary, and Jane, and Louisa to Christ;" and do not be at all doubtful about it. This is the purpose of God; expect it to be wrought out. Go to your street-corner, my beloved brother, and preach away still, even when the mob disturbs you. Go from door to door with your tracts, even though they may be cast in your face. Go, city missionaries and Bible-women, to your holy and righteous toil. Go each one of you to the work for which God has apprehended you, for as the Lord has apprehended you, it is for a purpose; and rest not until that purpose is fully subserved.

May the Lord arrest some sinners to-night! Pray, as you go down the aisles, "Lord, arrest them! Bring them to thy dear feet, and save them this night, for Jesus' sake!" Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—852, 694, 803.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PHILIPPIANS III.

The Holy Ghost indited this Epistle by the pen of his servant Paul. May he also write it on our hearts!

Verse 1. *Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.*

When you get to "finally," when you are very near the end of your journey, still "rejoice in the Lord." "Finally," says Paul, as if this was the end of his epistle, the conclusion of all his teaching: "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." But never do it finally, never come to an end of it. Rejoice in the Lord, and yet again rejoice, and yet again rejoice; and as long as you live, rejoice in the Lord.

1. *To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.*

Some hearers are like the Athenian academicians; they want continually to hear something new. The apostle says, "To have the same things written to you, is safe." So is it for you, dear friends; to have the same gospel, the same Jesus, the same Holy Spirit, made known to you, is safe. New doctrine is dangerous doctrine.

2. *Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers,*

They are like to dogs. If they fawn upon you, they will bemire you, if they do not bite you.

2, 3. *Beware of the concision. For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.*

There were some who had confidence in circumcision, who greatly troubled Paul. The apostle says that they were "the concision", the cutters-off, of whom he would have the Philippians beware.

4. *Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:*

If any man might have had confidence in the flesh, truly Paul might.

5, 6. *Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of*

Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

So that I do not know what more he could have had. If a Jew had tried to select a man who had something to glory in, he could not have picked any man to stand in the front of Paul. He was truly a Jew, he had received the initiatory rite, and on the right day. He was born of the innermost tribe, the tribe of Benjamin, in whose country stood the temple itself. He was a Pharisee, who pushed the law to the extreme; he tithed his mint and his cummin. Nobody could have anything to glory in which Paul had not.

7. *But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.*

So that, when we come to Christ, whatever we have to trust to, we must put away. We must write it on the other side of the ledger. We had entered it as a gain; now we must set it down as a loss; it is of no value whatsoever, it is a loss if it shall tempt us to trust any less in Christ.

8. *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:*

Those are sweet words, "my Lord." Remember how Thomas cried, in ecstasy, "My Lord and my God." Paul, by faith putting his finger into the prints of the nails, says, "My Lord."

8, 9. *For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him,*

Oh, what a precious place to be found in, "in him," trusting in him, hidden away in him, a member of his body, as it were, losing myself in him!

9. *Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,*

He does not say, not trusting it, but not even having it, not counting it, not thinking it worth while to put down among his possessions that which he once prized so much.

9, 10. *But that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him,*

Paul means, "That I may know him more than I now do;" for he knew him, and delighted in him; but he felt as if he had not begun really to know Christ. He was like a child at school, who has learnt to read and to write, and knows so much that he begins to want to know more.

10, 11. *And the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.*

He knew that all the dead would rise again; but he aspired to the first resurrection: "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

12, 13. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended:*

He did count himself as saved, he knew that he was Christ's; but he did not count himself as having realized all that Christ meant to do for him and by him. He did not reckon that he had reached as far as he could reach, or learnt all that he could learn, or done all that he could do.

13, 14. *But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

You have seen a man running very fast. How he leans forward, as though he would send his heart before him, and go quicker than his legs can carry him! So did the apostle "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

15, 16. *Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*

Let us keep all the good that we have received; let us not give up the truth that we have learnt; let us not leave the way along which we have travelled so far; and let us keep together, let perfect unanimity prove that the work of grace is going on in one as well as in another.

17. *Brethren, be followers together of me,*

In these days, certain people find fault with Paul, and speak of him as if he were not inspired, and not to be followed as Christ was; but here he expressly says what no man like Paul would ever say unless moved of the Holy Spirit, for he was modest, and by no means anxious to push himself forward: "Brethren, be followers together of me."

17. *And mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.*

Mark them, but do not follow them. See how they walk, but do not imitate them: "Have us for an ensample."

18. (*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:*

I lay a stress upon the article: "They are *the* enemies of the cross of Christ." Professors of religion, who get into the church, and yet lead ungodly lives, are the worst enemies that the cross of Christ has. These are the sort of men who bring tears into the minister's eyes; these are they who break his heart; they are *the* enemies of the cross of Christ.

19. *Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.*)

"Who mind earthly things,"—even when they profess to be minding spiritual things; pretending to be followers of Christ up to heaven, and yet really making a gain of the things of God here below.

20. *For our conversation is in heaven;*

Can you say that, dear friend? Is your citizenship in heaven? Is your conversation there? Do you often commune with your Lord upon the throne? Judge yourselves whether it be so or not. It is a very poor thing to have a name to be in heaven, and yet never to have any converse with heaven. I wish that we could all say that we talk more to God than we do to men, and have more business upward than we have here below.

20. *From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*

He is coming! He is coming! Are we looking for him? This is the true position of the Christian, looking for the appearing of his Lord.

21. *Who shall change our vile body,*

"The body of our humiliation." We have only part of the redemption while we are here. The soul is regenerated, newly-born; but the body is not. "The body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness." The redemption of the purchased possession will be perfect at the resurrection. The resurrection will be, to the body, what regeneration is to the soul. We sometimes wonder why we are sick, when Christ could make us well in a moment; but the reason is that, as yet, he has not fully brought his divine power to bear upon the body. That is to be by-and-by; we are waiting for the Saviour, "who shall change our vile body."

21. *That it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.*

May he show some part of that blessed power in us to-night! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

TWELVE COVENANT MERCIES.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 9TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 30th, 1889.

"Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live: and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."—Isaiah lv. 3.

I GOT so far this morning* as to plead with men to come to God to hear what he had to say, to give diligent and earnest heed to his teaching about their souls and about salvation; and while I pleaded, I can truly say, with all the strength I had, I made this one of the master arguments that, in hearing, their soul would live, and in coming to God, they would find him ready to enter into covenant with them, "an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David."

That seemed to me to be one of the most astonishing truths that was ever given to man to preach, that God would be a high contracting party with poor insignificant and guilty man, that he would make a covenant with man; yes, with you and with me; that he would bind himself by a solemn promise, give his sacred pledge, and enter into a holy contract of mercy with the guilty sons of Adam. I thought that, if men were in their right minds, and God had taught their reason to be reasonable, they would be drawn to the Lord by such a wonderful promise as this, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Remember that there was a covenant of old, which men broke; the covenant of works, "This do, and thou shalt live." Keep such and such commands, and thou shalt be rewarded. That covenant failed because man did not keep God's commands, and so did not earn the promised reward. We broke the terms of that contract, and it is no longer valid, except that we come under penalty for the breach of it; and that penalty is, that we are to be cast away from God's presence, and to perish without hope, so far as that broken covenant is concerned.

Now, rolling up that old covenant as a useless thing out of which no salvation can ever come, God comes to us in another way, and he says, "I will make a new covenant with you, not like the old one at all." It is a covenant of grace: a covenant made, not with the worthy,

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,092, "God's Own Gospel Call."

but with the unworthy; a covenant not made upon conditions, but unconditionally, every supposed condition having been fulfilled by our great Representative and Surety, the Lord Jesus Christ; a covenant without an "if" or a "but" in it; "ordered in all things, and sure;" a covenant of shalls and wills, in which God says, "I will, and thou shalt;" a covenant just suited to our broken-down and helpless condition; a covenant which will land every one who is interested in it in heaven. No other covenant will ever do this. I tried to expatiate upon that covenant this morning; and I thought that I would close the day by showing to any who desire to be in this covenant of grace what the blessings are that God promises to give to guilty men when they come to him, when they accept his love and his mercy. What are these blessings?

I have little else to do to-night but to refer you again, as I did this morning, to God's Word. Beloved, if you had met together, after the death of some wealthy relative, and his will was about to be read to you, you would not require an eloquent lawyer, you would all be very attentive, and some of you who are a little deaf would recover your hearing. An important question would be, "What has he left?" A still more important enquiry would be, "What has he left to me?" Well, I want you to feel to-night that you do not want an eloquent preacher; I am only going to read God's will to you, his covenant, which is virtually the testament or will of Christ, and all that you have to do is to listen, and say, "What has he left? What has he bequeathed to me? What does he covenant to give to me?" And remember that, whoever you may be, if you are willing to be saved by grace, you may be saved by grace. If you give up all hope of being saved anyhow else, you may be saved by the free mercy and love of God. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." If you come and take Christ to be your Saviour, then all the promises of God, which in him are yea, and in him Amen, are made to you. If you take him, you take all that is in the covenant, for he is the covenant. Embodied in himself is the whole covenant of grace, and he who hath Christ hath all it contains.

I am going to point you to some of the passages in which we have this covenant written out at length. I shall not say much upon any item; but I shall refer you to twelve wonderful mercies of the covenant of grace. Will you kindly look in your Bibles at the prophecy of Jeremiah, chapter thirty-one, verse thirty-four? There is no music more sweet to me than the rustle of your Bibles. I sometimes preach, nay, I frequently preach when I may read what I like, and nobody follows me to see if I quote correctly. I have been inclined to buy you wheelbarrows, so that you may bring your Bibles to chapel in them, since many of you do not seem to have any here. What is the best way of hearing the Word? Is it not to search and see whether what the preacher says is really according to the Word of God?

I. One of the first mercies of the covenant is SAVING KNOWLEDGE. Turn to Jeremiah thirty-one, and let us begin to read at verse thirty-one: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took

them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord." There is one of the first blessings of the covenant of grace, saving knowledge.

Man by nature knows not God. He does not want to know God; and when he is aroused to think of God at all, God seems a great mystery, a being invisible, unreachable; and the man says, "Who shall make me to know God?" He reads his Bible, it may be; and even that he does not understand. He hears the preacher; but the Lord's servant seems to talk a jargon which the unconverted man cannot comprehend. Brethren, there is no knowing God except through God. The man's neighbour cannot teach him, even though he may attempt it. Though he may say, "Know the Lord," yet he cannot give knowledge of God. By nature, our eyes are blinded; we cannot see. You may hold even the electric light to a blind man's sightless orbs, but it will not give him sight. Blind Bartimæus saw no light till Jesus spoke to him. Saul of Tarsus was blind enough, by his bigotry and self-righteousness, until God gave him a glorious light to shine into his soul.

Now, here is a covenant that God will give the knowledge of himself to the lost, and the guilty, and the ruined, to those who have provoked him, and gone astray from him. Where are those to whom this covenant shall be fulfilled to-night? I cannot tell you, save by marks and tokens; and this is one of the marks. Do you know that you are blind? Do you know that you cannot see apart from divine grace? Do you long to see? He is not totally blind, in a spiritual sense, who knows that he is so. He is not in the dark who feels that he is in the dark; there is already some degree of light that makes him perceive the darkness visible. O soul, if thou desirest to know God, here is the covenant, "They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them"! All God's chosen shall know him; they shall not abide in ignorance; they shall not die in ignorance; they shall come to know the Lord; and they shall grow in the grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Oh, what a privilege this is! "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." If any man is ignorant of his God, let him hear the Word of the Lord, and let him seek the Lord, and God will give him instruction concerning himself, and make him to know the great Jehovah, the Father of our spirits, who passeth by iniquity, transgression, and sin.

II. But I must not linger on any one blessing. The first covenant mercy is saving knowledge; the next is, GOD'S LAW WRITTEN IN THE HEART. Let me read you verse thirty-three again: "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." You know that the Law of Moses was written on two tablets of stone.

Wonderfully precious those two slabs of marble must have been when the divine finger had traced the solemn lines. Moses had a great charge to keep when he had those two divinely-written tablets; but he broke them because the people had in spirit broken them; it could not be that such divine writing should ever be handled or looked at by such an unholy people. Now, brethren, it was of no use writing the Law on tablets of stone except for the condemnation of the people; but when God comes in the covenant of grace, he does not merely give us the Law in a Book, the Law written in legible characters; but he comes and writes on the fleshy tablets of our heart. Then the man knows the Law by heart. What is better, he loves the Law. That Law accuses him; but he would not have it altered; he bows and confesses the truthfulness of the accusation. He cries, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep thy Law." And this is the covenant blessing. God makes men to love his commandments, and to delight themselves in truth, and righteousness, and holiness.

A very wonderful thing is this writing in our heart; nobody but God can write in human hearts. We can write certain thoughts upon your minds as we appeal to your ears; but to get at the heart is another thing. He that hath the keys of heaven, he that hath the keys of the heart, he that shuts and no man opens, or opens and no man shuts, can really get at the human heart; but he does so get at it that he writes there his commandments; and this he does to men who formerly hated those commandments; he makes them love them. Men who despised his commandments, he makes to honour them. As for men who forgot his commandments, he writes them in their hearts, so that they cannot get away from them. As for men who would have changed the commandments, he changes their hearts instead; and then their hearts and the commandments agree together.

This is a second covenant blessing. Do any of you want these blessings? Would you like to know the Lord? Do you wish to have the Law written on your hearts? Be it unto you according to your faith. Believe that God can do this for you, trust in Christ that it may be done unto you, and even so shall it be.

III. The third covenant mercy (we cannot dwell on any item long) is, FREE PARDON. You will find this at the end of the thirty-fourth verse: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Oh, this is a great blessing of the covenant. You people who have never sinned, or who think that you have not, you who believe yourselves to have been always good, or at least as good as you could be, and far above the average of mankind, you exceedingly excellent people, who have never done anything that you need to repent of very greatly, well, I have nothing for you here. Only remember what Mary sang, "He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich" (that is you) "he hath sent empty away." But if there be a soul here that feels the burden of its guilt, one bowed down with grief because of the heavy load of past iniquity that lies upon it, why, surely you, if you have the faith, will jump for joy as you read these words, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." First, he will forgive it, blot it right out. "Be," saith he, "as if you had never offended. Come to me,

come to my heart, as if you had always loved me. Guilty though you be, I will not impute iniquity to your charge, I will forgive it." The great Judge will put on the white gloves, and not the black cap. You shall be forgiven. And then the Lord says, "I will remember their sin no more." It is a wonderful thing when omnipotence overcomes omniscience, when omnipotent love will not allow omniscience to recollect: "I will remember their sin no more." Satan comes and pleads against the sinner, "Lord, he did so and so." God says, "I do not remember it;" nor does he remember it, for he laid it all on Christ, and Christ suffered the penalty due for it, and therefore it is gone. It is never to be recalled; it stands not in the book of remembrance; and as the Lord looks over this man's life, when he comes to the black pages, there is a blank; not a line of it is left, for he who died has made the scarlet sins as white as snow. "I will remember their sin no more."

Oh, what a precious covenant mercy is this! I do not feel as if I wanted to elaborate or garnish it in any way, or give you any illustrations, or tell you any anecdotes. Was there ever set before you such a glorious gift? Will you not have it, the perfect pardon of every sin, and a divine act of amnesty and oblivion, for every crime, of every sort, published in the covenant of grace to every soul that is willing to receive it through Christ Jesus the Saviour?

IV. Let us look a little farther, and see if there is not something more. Look to the next chapter, Jeremiah thirty-two, at the thirty-eighth verse: "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God." That is the next covenant mercy, RECONCILIATION. The offence is put away, the sin is pardoned. "Now," says God, "They shall be my people." "Lord, they are the people who worshipped Baal; they are the horrid wretches who gave their children up to be burned in the red-hot arms of Molech." "They shall be my people," saith the Lord. "But, Lord, these are the men and women who committed adultery and fornication, and were even guilty of murder." "They shall be my people," saith the Lord. "But, Lord, they provoked thee to anger year after year, and would not hearken to thy prophets." "They shall be my people," saith the Lord, "and I will be their God."

Did you ever think how much there is involved in that expression "I will be their God"? God is everything; and when God gives himself to us, he gives us more than all time and all eternity, all earth and all heaven. "Fear not, Abram," said the Lord to the patriarch, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," as if it was reward enough for any man to have God to be his God; and so it is. More riches than Crœsus, more honour than the greatest conqueror, hath that man who hath this God to be his God for ever and ever. "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." The young people might look that text out, and find how many times it occurs in the Word of God. I remember many times that God puts it, "I will be their God, and they shall be my people." This is another grand covenant blessing. Are you willing to be the people of God, are you willing to take him, even this God to be yours for ever and ever? If so it be, then is the text true concerning you, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

V. Will you follow me to the next verse for a fifth covenant mercy, the blessing of TRUE GODLINESS? "And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them." See here, that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. "The fear of God" is a description of true godliness; and God says that he will give this to men. He might have asked it of you, and rightly, too, but you would never have yielded it; but when he says that he will give it, that is a very different thing. He is willing to give you his fear, to give you true religion, to bestow upon you that veneration of his sacred name which lies at the bottom of all godliness. He will give you that, give that to you who never had it, and even despised it, to any of you who have lived all your lives without it, but who are willing to come and take it, this night, as the gift of his grace through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the Lord make you willing in this the day of his power, for that is a part of the covenant blessing! The willingness itself is his gift, and this he gives freely to his own.

VI. Now look, dear friends, to the next verse, which is more wonderful than anything that I have yet read. The sixth covenant mercy is, CONTINUANCE IN GRACE: "And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Talk about final perseverance, is it not taught here? "I will not turn away from them, and they shall not depart from me." What a covenant blessing this is! It reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus concerning his sheep: "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Yes," I heard a man say, who did not believe what that verse teaches, "No man shall pluck them out of his hand; but they may crawl away from between his fingers." No, they shall not. See how this text secures them both ways. "I will not turn away from them, to do them good: but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Here are both gaps blocked; there is no getting out either way. God will not leave you, and he will not let you leave him. This is a covenant blessing indeed. Oh, for faith to grip it! The soul that comes to Christ, and rests itself wholly upon him, shall find two hands to grasp it, even these two gracious words, "I will not turn away from them," and "they shall not depart from me." And this is spoken of the guilty, of the very men who provoked God.

> "Wonders of grace to God belong,
> Repeat his mercies in your song."

If God saved the good, and the meritorious, and the righteous, then the proud Pharisees would swarm in every street in heaven, and God would have no glory; but when he saves the vilest of the vile, then the publicans, who are afraid to lift their eyes to heaven when they think of their own unworthiness, will get near the throne, and sing; oh, how they will sing of free grace and dying love!

This covenant would be great enough if there was nothing more in it than the six blessings that I have mentioned.

VII. I must trouble you to turn in your Bibles to another prophecy,

to read about another of the mercies of this covenant, namely, CLEANSING. Some poor soul says, "Well, I can see that God is going to do great things; but I feel myself so unclean, I dare not come near to God. Why, sir, I am polluted all over, inside and out, I am altogether like a leprous man!" Come then, let me read this verse to you, the twenty-fifth verse of the thirty-sixth chapter of Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." God's Word elsewhere says, "Wash you, make you clean." That is your duty; but here you are told that the Lord will wash you, and make you clean. This is your privilege. "Ye are clean," said Christ to his disciples, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." That is "the washing of water by the word" of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians. The Lord sprinkles this "clean water" upon the leprous and the polluted sinner, upon him who lies covered with his own blood, a filthy thing in the sight of God, and loathsome to himself. The free-grace covenant runs, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." When God himself says, "Ye shall be clean," I wot that we are clean, for he is the best judge of true cleanliness. His pure and holy eyes detect every spot of sin, and every latent trace of disease. Though it be deep within the heart, he can spy it out; but he says, "I will sprinkle you, and ye shall be clean." Blessed be his name!

And then he goes on to enumerate that from which he will cleanse us: "From all your idols will I cleanse you." Is drink your idol? Is some lust of the flesh your idol? "Oh!" say you, "I cannot get rid of these things." No, but the Lord can cleanse you from them. Only come to him, hearken diligently to him, trust him, yield yourself up, surrender yourself to him, and he will dash your idols in pieces, and tear them from their thrones. He will also cleanse you from whatever else there may be that is unmentionable, "from all your filthiness;" things not to be spoken of, not even to be mentioned, those things that are done in secret, "I will cleanse you from them," saith the Lord. I may be speaking to somebody here who, as he listens to me, thinks that I am talking some rhodomontade, some romance. "Why," says he, "I am a filthy creature. I am a great sinner. Can God bless me?" Yes, he can bless even *you*. Did you never hear of Colonel Gardiner? On the very night on which he had made an appointment to commit a filthy sin, Christ appeared to him, and he thought that he heard him say, "I have done all this for thee; wilt thou never turn to me?" He did turn to Jesus, and he became noted as an eminent Christian man, more noted than he had formerly been as a debauched officer in the army. The Lord Jesus Christ still works these wonders of grace. He meets men often when they are desperately set on mischief, just as a horse might be rushing into the battle, and he comes and lays his hand on the rein, and turns it, and leads it back whithersoever he wills, such is the power of his almighty love. I pray him to do the same to-night according to this wondrous promise, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you."

VIII. Nor is that all; for, if a man should be made clean once, he would soon get foul again if left to himself, so here follows the next astounding covenant mercy of RENEWAL OF NATURE. Listen: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." It is not said, "I will help you to this," but, "I will do it;" not, "I will help you to make yourself a new heart," no, nothing of the kind, but, "I will give you a new heart." You know that if you cut off the branches of a tree, it will grow fresh ones; but if you could tear out its heart, it would never grow a new one. There are some creatures, like the lobster, that will shed their claws, and the claws will grow again; but a lobster never grows a new heart. If the centre of animal or vegetable life is once destroyed, there is no renewing it; but God can work this miracle in human hearts, he can strike at the very centre of man's nature, and change it. It is little to render pure the streams, but it is a great marvel to cleanse an impure spring, so that a spring of bitter water suddenly turns sweet. This is a miracle that can only be wrought by the finger of God; and there is nothing short of this renewal of nature that is worth having.

I know that some people fancy that Christians, when they do not go into such and such worldly amusements, deny themselves very much. Nothing of the kind. It would be an awful denial to us if we had to go with the worldlings. Those who frequent the theatre and places of loose amusement, perhaps think that it is a denial to us not to go with them. Oh, dear, dear, dear, they little know us! When I go down to a friend's farm, I see a man carrying to the pigs a couple of pails full of food; but I never envy the pigs. I like them to have all that they can, and to enjoy themselves; but do not suppose that I am denying myself in not wanting their food; my taste does not lie that way. But suppose that a man has a hog's heart, what is the way to deal with him? To deny him his swill? Certainly not, let him have it while he is like the hogs. The thing that is wanted is a change of heart, and when his heart is turned into a renewed man's heart, and is made to be a God-like heart, then it is no denial to him to loathe the things which once gave him so much pleasure. His tastes are entirely changed; and that is according to the promise of the covenant, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." The old heart is very hard; in some, it seems to be petrified altogether; you cannot make any impression upon it. You are received with ridicule, however earnest you may be in your pleadings for God. But the Lord can change the stony heart.

"Our heart, that flinty, stubborn thing,
That terrors cannot move,
That fears no threat'nings of his wrath,
Shall be dissolved by love.

Or he can take the flint away,
That would not be refin'd;
And from the treasures of his grace,
Bestow a softer mind."

Then the man, who was just now as hard as flint, sits and weeps over his sins. See how watchful he is in the presence of all kinds of temptations. He is half afraid to put one foot before another. The very man who was called "Devil-may-care" is now the one who does care, and who trembles lest he should in any way grieve the living God. What a blessed covenant mercy is this!

IX. But I must hurry on. The ninth covenant mercy is, HOLY CONVERSATION. Let me read verse twenty-seven: "And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." When God deals with a man in the way of grace, he not only calls him to holiness, but he gives him holiness; he not only bids him walk in his way, but he makes him walk in his way; not by compulsion, not by any kind of physical force, but by the sweet constraints of infinite love. The man's entire life is changed externally, just as I have shown you that his heart is changed internally. "Oh!" says one, "this is very wonderful." It is; it is the standing wonder of the gospel. Certain miracles have ceased; but the miracles of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, are being wrought every day. I rejoice that they are constantly being wrought in this very house of prayer; and I believe that they are going to be wrought to-night on some who are listening to me. If this miracle be wrought, you will not attribute it to me; I know you will not, for you will remember how feeble I am; but you will understand that there is the power of God, working through the preaching of the gospel, making dry bones to live, and turning black sinners into bright saints, to the praise of the glory of his grace.

X. Once again, will you kindly look at the thirty-first verse? This will be the tenth covenant mercy, HAPPY SELF-LOATHING. Perhaps you will wonder that I called this a mercy. Listen: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations." Free grace makes men loathe themselves. After God has done so much for them, they feel so ashamed that they do not know what to do. "O Lord," says the saint, "to think that ever I should have sinned against one who loved me so much! That I, the elect of God, should have acted like the elect of hell! That I, who was God's own, should have called myself the devil's own! That I, who was chosen unto holiness and eternal life, should have passed it all by as if it were no concern of mine!" Oh, may God grant us this holy loathing, as he will do when we have once tasted of his infinite love!

XI. The next covenant mercy, mentioned in the thirty-seventh chapter, verses twenty-six to twenty-eight, is the blessing of COMMUNION WITH GOD: "Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." God promises to set up his tabernacle

and his temple in the midst of his people, and to make them his priests, his servants, his children, his friends. God will be no longer absent from you when this covenant work shall have been wrought in you; but you shall be brought to dwell in his presence, to abide in his house, and to go no more out for ever, until the day when he shall take you to his palace home above, to be for ever in his presence, and to serve him day and night in his temple. And all this is promised to the worthless, to the vilest of the vile, all this without asking of you anything but that you will be willing to receive him, all this without requiring of you anything but just your emptiness that he may fill it, your sinfulness that he may cleanse it; only you must surrender to him. What have you to surrender? Nothing but a lot of rubbish of your own; your self-righteousness especially, which is but filthy rags. The Lord bring you to this surrender even now!

XII. There is only one more covenant mercy for me to mention, and I put it last because you will be surprised, perhaps, when I read it. It is about NEEDFUL CHASTISEMENT. For that I must ask you to turn to Psalm eighty-nine, and verse thirty: "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." There is a rod in the covenant. Children of God, you do not like it; it were no rod if you did; but it is good for you when you come under the fatherly discipline of God. Though he will never take his everlasting love from you, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; yet, when you transgress, the rod shall be sure to fall upon you, and sometimes its strokes shall come upon you before you transgress, to keep you from sinning.

I often hear of some of God's dearest servants suffering. I heard of one whom I am sure God loves very much. He is very useful; he spends himself in his Master's work. He is also very prosperous; God gives to him great wealth, which he discreetly and wisely uses; but he has had a very sharp affliction come upon him lately, which is enough to break his heart; and when I heard it, I said, "Yes, yes, God loves him; God loves him." If you are a child of God, note this truth, and accept it with joy, our heavenly Father never pampers his children. We may spoil our girls and boys; but our Father never spoils his children. If he gives you great happiness, and great success, and makes you useful, he will every now and then give you a whipping behind the door. You think sometimes, "That man is very happy; he has great blessing resting on his work." Yes, this man is very happy to tell you that he has not all sweets to drink, to make him sick and ill; but there are bitter tonics, sharp blows of the rod, to keep him right. If we have to bless God more for any one thing than for everything else, it is to thank him that we have not escaped the rod. Sickness is a choice blessing from God; I cannot measure the unutterable good that comes to us full often in that way; and losses in business, and crosses, and bereavements, and depressions of spirit, are all, when we see them in the light eternal, so many covenant mercies.

The true-born child of God cannot escape the rod, and would not if he might. He gets afraid when he does not sometimes feel it. He will not long have to be afraid about it, for it will come in due time. I think that I hear somebody say, "I do not want that." No, just so; you want worldly pleasure. Perhaps God will let you have it till you have spent all your substance on it, as the prodigal did; and then you will find that it is all weariness and sorrow, and you will want something better. But if to-night you will say, "I will take the covenant of grace, rod and all; for if I can be God's child, I will very gladly take the rod as part of the mercies of the covenant," come along, and you shall have it. Do seek the Lord to-night. Give not sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids till you have found him. God grant you all the mercies of the everlasting covenant, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—228, 489, 549.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JEREMIAH XXXII. 30—42.

Verse 30. *For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the* LORD.

Here were people who had done nothing else but evil. God had been very good to them, but they had been very bad to him. From their youth, and without a break, they had continued to rebel.

31. *For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,*

Jerusalem, which ought to have been a holy city, had been so impure that it had been a standing provocation to God from the day it was built.

32. *Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*

They seem to have been all alike. With scarcely an exception, from the highest class to the lowest, they were always disobeying God.

33. *And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.*

This is a fearful indictment. When men refuse to learn better, turn their back upon the King of kings, and will have nothing to do with him, surely the time for vengeance has come.

34, 35. *But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech;*

There was nothing so terribly bad but they would do it; there was nothing so unnatural, so detestable, but they must needs practise it.

35—38. *Which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. And now therefore thus*

saith the LORD, *the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence; behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God:*

Is not this a wonderful passage? After all this sin, and all this provocation, when we expect the thunder and lightning of divine judgment, behold, there is nothing but the sweet voice of pitying love: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." Oh, the wonders of divine grace! See what the covenant of grace does for guilty men.

39, 40. *And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them,*

"With them"—with these very people who had provoked him, and served Molech, and bowed before idol gods, and put the Lord to shame, and angered him.

40, 41. *That I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.*

A whole-hearted God, blessing those upon whom he looks with an eye of grace. It is a wonderful thing. If he had set his whole heart to destroy them, it would have seemed natural; but God is far above any conception of ours; and so, in the midst of guilt extraordinary and almost immeasurable, behold love equally extraordinary and grace altogether measureless.

42. *For thus saith the* LORD; *Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.*

Oh, for grace to lay hold upon this everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David, and to be saved thereby!

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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OBEYING CHRIST'S ORDERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 16TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, June 13th, 1889.

"His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."—John ii. 5.

IT does not need a strong imagination to picture Mary, probably at that time the widowed mother of our Lord. She is full of love, and of a naturally kind, sympathetic disposition. She is at a marriage; and she is very pleased that her Son is there, with the first handful of his disciples. Their being there has made a greater demand upon the provisions than was expected, and the supply is running short; so she, with an anxiety that was natural to such a mother, of her years, and of her gentle spirit, thinks that she will speak to her Son, and tell him that there is a want, so she says to him, "They have no wine."

There was not much amiss in that, surely; but our Lord, who seeth not as man seeth, perceived that she was putting to the front her motherly relationship, at a time when it was needful that it should be in the background. How needful it was, history has shown; for the apostate church of Rome has actually made Mary a mediatrix, and prayers have been addressed to her; she has even been asked to use her maternal authority with her Son. It was well that our Saviour should check anything that might tend to give any countenance to Mariolatry, which has been altogether so mischievous; and it was needful for him to speak to his mother with somewhat more of sharpness than, perhaps, her conduct, in itself alone, might have required. So her august Son felt bound to say to her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee in such a matter as this? I am not thy son as a miracle-worker; I cannot work to please thee. No; if I work a miracle as the Son of God, it cannot be as your son; it must be in another character. What have I to do with thee in this matter?" And he gives his reason: "Mine hour is not yet come."

It was a gentle rebuke, absolutely needful from the prescience of all that would follow. You can easily picture how Mary took it. She

knew Christ's gentleness, his infinite love, how for thirty years there had never come anything from him that had grieved her spirit. So she drank in the reproof, and gently shrank back, thinking much more than she said; for she was always a woman who laid up these things, and pondered them in her heart. She says very little, but she thinks a great deal; and we see in her after conduct, in respect to this very miracle, that she thought very much of what Jesus had said to her. Brethren, you and I, with the very best intentions, may sometimes err towards our Lord; and if he then in any way rebukes us, and puts us back, if he disappoints our hope, if he does not allow our ambitious designs to prosper, let us take it from him as Mary took it from Jesus. Let us just feel that it must be right, and let us in silence possess ourselves in his presence.

Notice, then, this holy woman's quietude, ceasing to say a word, quietly drinking it all in; and then observe her wise admonition to the servants who were there to wait at the feast. Inasmuch as she had run before him, she would have them to follow after him, and she very wisely and kindly says to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it. Do not go to him with any of your remarks. Do not try to press him forward; do not urge him on; he knows better than we do. Stand back, and wait till he speaks; and then be quick to obey every single word that he utters." Beloved, I wish that, when we have learned a lesson, we would try to teach it. Sometimes our Master gives us a sharp word all to ourselves, and we would not tell anybody else what he has said. In our private communions, he has spoken to our conscience and to our heart; and we need not go and repeat that, as Mary did not. But, having learned the lesson well, let us then say to our next friend, "Do not err as I have done. Avoid the rock on which I struck just now. I fear that I grieved my Lord. My sister, I would not have you grieve him; my brother, I would try to tell you just what to do that you may please him in all things." Do you not think that we should minister to mutual edification if we did that? Instead of telling the faults of others, let us extract the essence from the discoveries which we make of our own errors, and then administer that as a helpful medicine to those who are round about us.

This holy woman must have spoken with a good deal of power. Her tone must have been peculiarly forcible, and her manner must have made a great impression upon the servants, for you notice that they did exactly what she told them. It is not every servant who will let a guest come into the house, and set up to be mistress; but so it was when she spoke to those servants, with her deep, earnest tones, as a woman who had learned something that she could not tell, but who yet, out of that experience, had extracted a lesson for others. She must have spoken with a wonderful melting force when she said to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it;" and they were all looking on with awe after she had spoken, drinking in her message to them as she had drunk in the message of the Lord.

Now I want to-night just to try to teach that lesson to myself and to you. I think that our own experience goes to show us that our highest wisdom, our very best prosperity, will lie in our cautiously keeping behind Christ, and never running before him, never forcing

his hand, never tempting him, as they did who tempted God in the wilderness, prescribing to him to do this or that; but, in holy, humble obedience, taking these words as our life-motto henceforth, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I will handle my text in this way: First, *What?* Secondly, *Why?* Thirdly, *What then?*

I. WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE HERE BIDDEN TO DO? In a word, it is to *obey* You who belong to Christ, and are his disciples, take heed to this word of exhortation, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

I want you to notice, first of all, that these words were spoken, not to the disciples of Christ, but to the servants who, in the Greek, are here called *diakonois*, the persons who were brought in to wait at the table, and to serve the guests. I know not whether they were paid servants, or whether they were friends who kindly volunteered their services; but they were the waiters at the feast. They were not told to leave their master; they were not bidden to give up their avocation as waiters. They were servants, and they were to continue servants; but still, for all that, they were to acknowledge Christ as their Master without casting off their obedience to the governor of the feast. Mary does not say to these people, "Put down those pots, leave off carrying those dishes;" but while they continue to do what they were doing, she says to them, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I thought that point was well worthy of our notice, that these servants, still abiding, as they were, yet were to render obedience to Christ.

That obedience, in the first place, would be *prepared obedience*. Mary came to get their minds ready to do what Christ should bid them. No man will obey Christ on a sudden, and keep on doing so. There must be a weighing, a considering; there must be a thoughtful, careful knowledge of what his will is, and a preparedness of heart, that whatever that will may be, as it is known so it shall be done. At first these servants did nothing. The guests wanted wine, but the servants did not go to Jesus, and say, "Master, wine is needed." Nay; but they stopped until he bade them fill the waterpots with water; then they filled them to the brim; but they did nothing till he bade them. A great part of obedience lies in not doing. I believe that, in the anxiety of many a trembling heart, the very best faith will be seen in not doing anything. When you do not know what to do, do nothing; and doing nothing, my brethren, will be found to be sometimes the very hardest work of all. In the case of a man in business, who has come into a difficulty, or of a sister with a sick child, or a sick husband, you know the impulse is to do something or other. If not the first thing that comes to hand, yet we feel that we must do something; and many a person has aggravated his sorrow by doing something, when, if he had bravely let it alone, believingly left it in God's hand, it would have been infinitely better for him. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." But do not do what every whim or fancy in your poor brain urges you to do. Do not run before you are sent. They who run before God's cloud, will have to come back again; and very happy they will be if they find the way back again. Where Scripture is silent, be you silent. If there is no command, thou hadst better wait till thou canst find some

guidance. Blunder not on with a headlong anxiety, lest thou tumble into the ditch. "Whatsoever he saith unto you," do that; but until he speaks, sit thou still. My soul, be patient before God, and wait until thou knowest his bidding!

This prepared obedience was to be the obedience of the spirit, for obedience lies mainly there. True obedience is not always seen in what we do, or do not do; but it is manifest in the perfect submission to the will of God, and the strong resolve that saturates the spirit through and through, that what he bids us we will do.

Let your obedience, in the next place, be *perfect obedience*. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." It is disobedience, and not obedience, which prompts us to select from the commands of Christ such as we care to obey. If thou sayest, "I will do what Christ bids me as far as I choose," thou hast in fact said, "I will not do what Christ bids me, but I will do what I please to do." That obedience is not true which is not universal. Imagine a soldier in the army, who, instead of obeying every command of his captain, omits this and that, and says that he cannot help it, or that he even means to omit certain things. Beloved, take heed of throwing any precept of thy Lord upon the dunghill. Every word that he has spoken to thee is more precious than a diamond. Prize it; store it up; wear it; let it be thy ornament and thy beauty. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," whether it relates to the Church of God and its ordinances, or to your walk out of doors among your fellow-men, or to your relationship in the family, or to your own private service for the Lord. "*Whatsoever*." See, there are to be no trimmings here, no cutting off of certain things: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Breathe this prayer at the present moment, "Lord, help me to do *whatsoever* thou hast said! May I have no choice; may I never let my own will come in to interfere; but, if thou hast bidden me do anything, enable me to do it, whatever it may be!"

This obedience, then, being prepared and perfect, is to be also *practical obedience*: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do not think about it, especially for a very long time, and then wait until it is more impressed upon you, or till there is a convenient season: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, *do it*." One of the great evils of the times is that of deliberating about a plain command of Christ, and asking, "What will be the result of it?" What have you to do with results? "But if I follow Christ in all things, I may lose my position." What have you to do with that? When a soldier is bidden to go up to the cannon's mouth, he is very likely to lose his "position", and something else; but he is bound to do it. "Oh, but I might lose my opportunities of usefulness!" What do you mean? That you are going to do evil that good may come? That is what it comes to. Will you really, before God, look that matter in the face? "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." At any expense, at any risk, do it. I have heard some say, "Well, I do not like doing things in a hurry." Very well, but what saith David? "I made haste, and delayed not—to keep thy commandments." Remember that we sin every moment that we delay to do anything commanded by Christ. Whether every moment of delay is a fresh sin, I cannot say; but if

we neglect any command of his, we are living in a condition of perpetual sinning against him; and that is not a desirable position for any of Christ's disciples to live in. Beloved, "whatsoever he saith unto you, *do it*." Do not argue against it, and try to find some reason for getting off it. I have known some believers who have not liked to have certain passages of Scripture read at the family altar, because they have rather troubled their consciences. If there is anything in the Bible that quarrels with you, you are wrong; the Bible is not. Come you to terms with it at once, and the only terms will be obey, obey, obey your Lord's will. I am not holding this up to you as a way of salvation; you know I should never think of doing that. I am speaking to those of you who are saved. You are Christ's servants, his saved ones; and now you have come to the holy discipline of his house, and this is the rule of it, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Do it practically. Have we not been talking too much about what should be done by our friends, or observing what others do not do? Oh, that the Spirit of God would come upon us, that our own walk might be close with God, our own obedience be precise and exact, our own love to Christ be proved by our continual following in his steps! Ours should be practical obedience.

It must be also *personal obedience:* "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." You know how much there is done by proxy nowadays. Charity is done so. A is in a great deal of need, B hears of it, and is very sorry indeed, and so he asks C to come and help him; and then he goes to bed, and feels that he has done a good thing. Or else, when A has told his story to B, B looks out to see if there is some Society that will help him, although he never subscribes to the Society, because he does not think of doing that. His part is just to pass A on to C, or to the Society: and, having done that, he feels satisfied. Do you wish the Saviour to say, in the last great day, "I was an hungred, and ye sent me to somebody else," or, "I was thirsty, and you directed me to the parish pump for drink"? Nothing of the kind. We must do something personally for Christ. So is it in the matter of endeavouring to win souls to Christ. There is nothing like personally speaking to people, button-holing them, looking them in the eye, talking your own personal experience over with them, and pleading with them to fly to Christ for refuge. Personal obedience is what is wanted. If one of these persons who were waiting had said, when the command had come from Christ to fill the waterpots, "John, you go and do that; William, you go and do that;" he would not have followed out Mary's command, "Whatsoever he saith unto *you*, do it." Do I touch the conscience of anybody here? Well, if so, from this time forth cease to be a servant of God by proxy, lest thou be saved by proxy, and to be saved by proxy will be to be lost. But do thou trust Christ for thyself, and then serve him for thyself, by his own mighty grace: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

It must also be *prompt obedience*. Do it at once; delay will take the bloom from the obedience. "Whatsoever he saith unto you," stand ready to obey. The moment that the command "March," is given to the soldier, he marches. The moment a command comes to your heart, and you see it to be really in the Word of God, do it. Oh, the

murdered resolutions that lie round about most men's lives! What they would have done, what they could have done, if they had but done it; but they have been building castles in the air, imagining lives they would like to lead, and not actually doing Christ's commands. Oh, for a prompt, personal, practical service to the Lord Jesus Christ!

And in our case it is to be *perpetual obedience*. Mary said to these waiters, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." "Keep on doing it; not only the first thing he says, but whatsoever he saith unto you. As long as this feast lasts, and he is here, do what my Son commands you." So, beloved, as long as we are in this world, until life's latest hour, may the Holy Ghost enable us to do just what Jesus bids us do! Can you say, my brethren and sisters,—

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave, and follow thee"?

Is it your wish that, until you enter into his rest, you should always bear his yoke, and follow his footsteps? Temporary Christians are not Christians. Those who ask for furlough from this divine service have never entered it. We have put on our regimentals never to take them off. As certain old knights in times of war slept in their armour, and had the lance and shield always ready to hand, so must the Christian be, from this time forth and for ever. "Ours not to reason why," ours not to delay when the command comes; but ours, while there is breath in our body, and life in our spirit, to serve him who hath redeemed us with his precious blood.

Thus I have feebly set before you what it is that we are called to do, that is, to obey Christ's orders.

II. Now for a few minutes let us ask, WHY IS THIS TO BE DONE? Beloved, why were these men to do what Jesus bade them? Let that melt into, "Why are you and I to do what Jesus bids us?"

First, *Christ is by nature worthy of obedience*. I count it an honour to serve Christ. Oh, what is he? Perfect Man, rising nobly above us all; perfect God, infinitely majestic in his two natures. Why, it seems to me as if we ought to love to do his bidding, and long to be conformed to his image! Here is the rest for our aspiring spirit. Here are the glory and the honour and the immortality for which we pant. By the glory of Christ, whom you unseen adore, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

Beside that, *Christ is our only hope*. All our prospects for the future depend upon him. Glory be to his blessed name! There is none like him. If he were gone from us, and we could not trust in him, life would be an endless darkness, an abyss of woe. By all the glory of his nature, and all that we owe to him, and all that we look for from him, I charge you, beloved friends, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

More than that, *he is all-wise, and so fit to lead*. Who but he could get these people out of their trouble at the feast when they wanted wine? He knew the way out of it all, a way that would manifest his own glory, and make his disciples believe in him, and make everybody round about happy. But if he did not show the way, nobody could. So let us obey him, for his commands are so wise. He never has made

a mistake, and he never will. Let us commit our way unto his keeping; and whatsoever he saith unto us, let us do it.

Besides, beloved, *Christ has hitherto rewarded our obedience.* Did you ever act rightly, and after all find it a mistake? Some of us have had to do very grievous things in our time, that have gone sorely against the grain. Would we do them again? Ay, that we would, if they cost ten times as much! No man has ever, in looking back, to regret that he followed the voice of conscience, and the dictates of God's Word; and he never will, though he should even go to prison and to death for Christ's sake. You may lose *for* Christ, but you shall never lose *by* Christ. When all comes to be totalled up, you shall be a greater gainer because of the apparent loss. He has never deceived you, and never misled you. Obedience to him has always brought you real solid peace. Therefore, "whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

Yet once more, *Christ is our Master, and we must obey him.* I hope, beloved, that there is no one among us here who would call him Master, and yet not do the things that he says. We do not talk about him as one who was once great, but who is gone away, and whose influence is now upon the wane, because he is not up to "the spirit of the age." No, but he still lives, and we still commune with him. He is our Master and Lord. When we were baptized into his death, it was no mere matter of form; but we were dead to the world, and we lived to him. When we took his sacred name upon us, and were called Christians, it was no sham; we meant that he should be Captain, King, and Master of our spirits. He is no Baali, that is, domineering lord; but he is Ishi, our Man, our Husband; and, in his husbandly relationship he is Lord and Governor of every thought and every motion of our nature. Jesus, Jesus, thy yoke is easy, and thy burden is light! It is lightsome and joyous to bear it. To get away from it, would be misery indeed; and that is one reason why I say to you to-night, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," because if you do not, you cast off your allegiance to him; and what are you going to do then? To whom will you go if you turn away from him? Every man must have a master. Will you be your own master? You cannot have a greater tyrant. Will you let the world be your master? Are you going to be a servant of "society"? There are no worse slaves than these. Are you going to live for pelf, for honour, for what is called "pleasure"? Ah, me, you may as well go down to Egypt, to the iron furnace, at once! To whom can we go? Jesus, to whom can we go, if we go away from thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life. "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar." Throw another bond of love about me, another cord of sweet constraint, and let me never even think of parting with thee. Let me be crucified to the world, and the world to me. Do not your hearts pray after that fashion? Oh, to be wholly Christ's, entirely Christ's, for ever Christ's! Yes, yes, we will listen to the command, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." I have given you the reason why we should obey Christ's orders.

III. And now, beloved, let me occupy the last few minutes in answering this question, WHAT WILL FOLLOW FROM THIS OBEDIENCE?

Suppose we do whatever Christ commands us, what then? I will tell you what then.

The first thing is, that you will feel *free from responsibility*. The servant, who has done what his master has bidden him, may in his own mind fear that some dreadful consequences may follow, but he says to himself, "It will be no fault of mine. I did what I was bidden to do." Now, beloved, if you want to get rid of the whole burden of life, by faith do whatsoever Christ commands you. Then, if the heavens should seem about to fall, it would be no business of yours to shore them up. You have not to mend God's work, and keep it right. I remember what Mr. John Wesley said to his preachers: "Now, brethren, I do not want you to mend my rules. I want you to obey them." That is pretty strong from John Wesley; but from our Lord Jesus Christ it comes most suitably. He does not want us to get altering, and mending, and touching up, and looking at consequences. No; do exactly what he tells you, and you have nothing to do with the consequences. You may have to bear them, but that he will give you grace to do; and it shall be your joy to bear all ill consequences that come of firm obedience to Christ. This kind of doctrine does not suit the year 1889. If you go over to Scotland, and see where the Covenanters' graves are, anybody who thinks according to the spirit of this age will say that they were just a set of fools to have been so stubborn and so strict about doctrine as to die for it. Why, really, there is not anything in the new philosophy that is worth dying for! I wonder whether there is any "modern thought" doctrine that would be worth the purchase of a cat's life. According to the teaching of the broad school, what is supposed to be true to-day may not be true to-morrow, so it is not worth dying for. We may as well put off the dying till the thing is altered; and if we wait a month, it will be altered, and thus, at the last, you may get the old creed back again. The Lord send it, and send us yet a race of men who will obey what he bids them, and do what he tells them, and believe what he teaches them, and lay their own wills down in complete obedience to their Lord and Master! Such a people will feel free from responsibility.

Then you shall feel *a sweet flow of love to Christ*. The disobedient child—well, he will not be turned out of the house, because he will not do the bidding of his mother and father; but when he does not submit to the rule of the house, he has a hard time of it, and he ought to have. There is that evening kiss, it is not as warm as it would have been; and that morning greeting, after long disobedience, has no happiness in it; and, indeed, the more kind father and mother are, the more unhappy he is. And the sweet love of Christ is such that it makes us unhappy in disobedience. You cannot walk contrary to Christ, and yet enjoy fellowship with him; and the more dear and near he would be to you, so much the wider does the gap seem to be when you are not doing his bidding.

Besides, there is no *carrying out your faith* except by doing as he bids you. That faith which lies only in a creed, or in a little pious book, is not good for much. Faith does what Christ bids it do, and it delights to do so. It rejoices to run risks, it delights to put off from

the land, and get out to sea. It is glad to sacrifice itself when Jesus calls for it, because faith cannot be satisfied without bearing fruit, and the fruit of faith is obedience to him in whom we believe.

Beloved, I also think that, if we will obey Christ in what he says, we shall be *learning to be leaders*. Wellington used to say that no man is fit to command until he has learned to obey; and I am sure that it is so. We shall never see a race of really first-rate men unless our boys and girls are made to obey their parents in their childhood. The essential glory of manhood is lost when disobedience is tolerated; and, certainly, in the Church of God, the Lord does put his leading servants through very severe ordeals. The best place for the books of a minister is not his library, but a sick-bed very often. Affliction is our school; and before we can deal with others, God must deal with us. If thou wilt not obey, thou shalt not be set to command.

And lastly, I do believe that learning to obey is *one of the preparatives for the enjoyments of heaven*. Why, in heaven, they have no will but God's will! Their will is to serve him, and delight themselves in him; and if you and I do not learn here below what obedience to God is, and practise it, and carry it out, how could we hope to be happy in the midst of obedient spirits? Dear hearers, if you had never learned to trust Christ and obey him, how could you go to heaven? You would be so unhappy there that you would ask God to let you run into hell for shelter, for nothing would strike you with more horror than to be in the midst of perfectly holy people who find their delight in the service of God. May the Lord bring us to this complete obedience to Christ! Then this world will be an inclined plane, or a ladder such as Jacob saw, up which we shall trip with holy gladness till we come to the top, and find our heaven in perfect obedience to God.

It is not Mary who speaks to you to-night, but it is the Church of God, the mother of all who truly love Christ; and she says to you, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it," and if you will do it, he will turn the water into wine for you. He will make your love more glad and happy than it ever would have been without obeying him, and he will provide for you. Obey him, and he will comfort you. Obey him, and he will perfect you. Be with him in the ways of duty, and you shall be with him in the home of glory.

The Lord grant this, of his infinite grace, giving to us to know the will of Christ, and then working in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure! Amen and Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—84 (Song II), 653, 23 (Version II).

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN II. 1—11.

Our Saviour had lived on the earth for thirty years, and had worked no miracle. There was the hiding of his power. He had been subject unto his parents, and had lived in obscurity. Now he has broken through the obscurity, and he begins his public ministry by working a miracle.

Verse 1. *And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee;*

"The third day." John keeps a kind of diary for Christ. In those first days there was something for every day, and they were a specimen of the whole life of the Saviour. He could never say, like Titus, "I have lost a day." Every day had its deed, glorifying to God, and blessed to men. Let us also try to labour for Christ every day; let there be no day without its mark. May God grant that there may be something to make every day memorable! "And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee." The first miracle of our Lord was not wrought at Jerusalem; but away there in the back settlements, in "Galilee of the Gentiles." It was necessary for him to be seen, and to work miracles which might be seen; but he began in an obscure region, among a despised people.

1. *And the mother of Jesus was there:*

This expression leads to the belief that there was some kind of kinship between the bridegroom or the bride and the mother of Jesus, for it is not said that she was invited to be there, but that she "was there."

2. *And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.*

Happy marriage, where Christ is invited to be present! Where Christ goes, his disciples go. If they suffer with him, they also rejoice with him. If he goes to a feast, they must go, too: "Both Jesus was called, and his disciples." They were only five; but five is a large number to add to a poor family's wedding party. It shows the generosity of their heart that they invited Jesus to come and bring his disciples; and he went to put honour upon marriage, especially as he foresaw that the day would come when the apostate church of Rome would reckon marriage to be dishonourable, and not permit one who was married to officiate as a minister.

3. *And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.*

I notice that John calls Mary "the mother of Jesus." I suppose he had in his mind the dying word of Christ, "Behold thy mother!" Such things make a deep impression upon us; and we are apt, when writing, to use the phrases that have been burnt into the memory. "The mother of Jesus." Because she has been too much exalted in the Romish church, I fear that we run to the other extreme, and think too little of this woman to whom the angel Gabriel said, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women."

"They wanted wine." They had not been long married before there was want in the house. Even in the brightest days of life, they wanted something more; and the mother of Jesus saw that they were in want, and that the marriage festival would be dishonoured; so she went to her son and she said, "They have no wine." I fear she spoke a little like an ordinary mother addressing her son; but the time had come when that discipline was to end. Mary was not his mother as the Son of God. He was about to work a miracle, and he would have her and all his relatives know that he would not use his miraculous powers merely for their advantage; but for the glory of God and the instruction of men.

4. *Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*

It was a very difficult position for him to be in, to act the part of a loving and obedient son as far as his manhood was concerned, and yet, as the Son of God, by no means to compromise his divine character, but to stand out there as being under no influence of the flesh. Just as we are not to know Christ after the flesh, so he no longer knew mother, or brother, or friend, according to earthly relationship; and when Mary intruded her motherhood upon him, it was but right and fitting that he should say, "What have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." The Saviour had an hour for everything; an hour for suffering, and an hour for working; and he did everything punctually, promptly to the minute. That was one of the beauties of his life: "Mine hour is not yet come." Perhaps he meant, "My hour to work this miracle is not yet come;" and he would not be hurried by anybody. Beloved, it is not easy to be familiar with Christ, as I trust we are, and yet always to maintain humble deference to his sacred will. Never let us pray as if we were dictators, or his equals. We must keep our place, however near we come to the dear bosom of our Lord. He is still in heaven, and we are upon earth. He is the Master, we are the servants; and if we are as favoured as his mother was, we must not go too far, as she did.

5. *His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*

This holy woman took the rebuke in silence. She said nothing; she felt the force of Christ's words, she proved that she did by now fully believing that he would do something or other. Had he not said, "Mine hour is not yet come"? Did not that mean that the hour would come, and that he would do something by-and-by? So she quietly accepted his reproof. Oh, you who are in great trouble, you feel as if you could force the hand of Christ; but you must not think of doing that. Even if you could have power over him, you would be very foolish to use it. Let him alone; he knows best how and when to show his grace towards you. Keep silence before him, and in patience commit your way unto him.

6. *And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.*

I admire the accuracy of the Holy Spirit. John does not know exactly how much these vessels held; they were not made to measure things in, so he writes, "containing two or three firkins apiece." Let us always speak correctly; sometimes, "almost" or "thereabouts" will be words that will just save our truthfulness. Let us not speak positively when we do not know; and when the accuracy of a statement is necessary, and we cannot give it in terms that are definite, let us give it in words like these, "containing two or three firkins apiece." These were great "waterpots of stone." Stone will not, as a rule, hold the flavour of anything that has been in it, like an earthen vessel would do; so these pots, which had contained nothing else but water, could not be suspected of having any lees of wine concealed therein, or any flavouring material that would make the water taste like wine. No, they were genuine stone waterpots.

7. *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*

There was no fear of anything but water being there: "They filled them up to the brim." They obeyed Christ to the letter. If Christ says to you, "Fill the waterpots with water," fill them up to the brim. Never cut down his commandments; carry them out as far as the largest interpretation can go. When you are bidden to believe in him, believe in him up to the brim. When you are told to love him, love him up to the brim. When you are commanded to serve him, serve him up to the brim.

8. *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*

"Draw out now." "*Now.*" He had not turned the water into wine by any incantation. He simply willed it, and it was done. He said, "Draw out now." He did not want to leave it unnoticed, because he had not worked a miracle before, and he could not say whether this was one. He was sure it was; so he said to the servants, when they had filled the waterpots with water, "Draw out now. Do not bring it to me for me to taste it; I know what it is. Take it to the chairman of the festival, to him who sits at the head of the table, and is the judge of the wine:" "and they bare it." The holy confidence of Christ is admirable. May we be able, by faith, so to work, with a calm consciousness of divine help! But notice this. Whenever the Lord fills any of you with a blessing, think that you hear him say, "Draw out now." He does not fill these pots that they may keep full. "Draw out now." Did you have a good time last Monday night at the prayer-meeting? Some of us had. "Draw out now." Have you lived near to God of late, and are you very happy? "Draw out now." If he has filled you up to the brim, draw out now; for, if you try to store it up, it will become useless. Selfishness will poison it all.

9. *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*

There was no collusion, for the governor, who tasted it, did not know where it came from; and the servants, who knew where it came from, did not taste it, so that they did not know what it was like. If anybody objects to the Saviour making wine, I think that the best reply is that all the wine which is made of water will do nobody any hurt, and the more of it the better; and this was so made, certainly. They say that there is a devil in every grape. There were no grapes here; and I am afraid that there is not much of them in most of the wine that is made nowadays; there is something worse than devil in that.

10. *And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*

That the governor of the feast did not understand, but he admired it; and here is a picture of what our Lord always does. He gives his people the best last. At first, the wine of the kingdom is mingled with much bitterness, salt tears of sorrow flow into it, but it improves as we go on; and when we shall drink it with him, in the kingdom of God, what will it be like? The joy of Christ's love on earth is heaven, but when we get to heaven, and drink it fresh from the everlasting spring, what will that joy be? Oh, the blessedness laid up for the people of God! We pluck some of the fruit from the trees, and eat it; but the fruits laid up in the fruit-chamber, to get ripe by-and-by, are the very pick of the fruit of the tree of life. You who live for the world have had your best already; but, as for our feast with Christ, we go from good to better, and from better to the best.

11. *This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory;*

Moses turned water into blood; Christ turned water into wine. One brought a curse upon the common things of daily life; the other put an added sweetness and blessing into them.

11. *And his disciples believed on him.*

They did believe on him before; but now they had ocular demonstration of his divine power and Godhead; and they believed as they had not believed before. May you and I often make distinct progress in faith, so that it may be said of us also, "His disciples believed on him"!

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

GOD'S PUPIL, GOD'S PREACHER: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 23RD, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 28th, 1889.

"O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."—Psalm lxxi. 17.

You notice how much David is at home with God. He talks about him; he does better, he talks to him. He hears God speaking to him, and he keeps up a dialogue with God. Whence came this holy familiarity? It sprang from long acquaintance; David as a boy had known God. He knew him when he was old and grey-headed; and, you know, old friends use language to one another which would not be tolerated in occasional acquaintances. There are certain things which they who have long known the Lord, and who abide in him, may say to God, and of God, which might not be said by others; it might even verge on blasphemy if others were to say the same things. When you read books like Rutherford's Letters, or Madame Guyon's Sonnets, or George Herbert's Poems, you must not think that everybody may speak so. These were the Johns and the Marys, the favourites of heaven; they had dwelt so long with the King that he permitted to them, nay, he fostered in them, things that would be impertinences in strangers, and might not even be seemly to beginners in the things of God. Oh, may you and I live long enough and well enough to be on very intimate terms with God! May we walk with him till, one of these days, we walk away with him, and they say of us, "He was not, for God took him"!

David here tells us, nay, he tells God rather than us, that he had been *God's pupil* all his life: "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth," and then he says that he had been *God's pupil-teacher:* "and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." When we have listened to David on these two points, the preacher will venture, with some hesitancy, but still under a sort of compulsion, to use

the words himself, and say, "O God, thou hast taught *me* from my youth: and hitherto have *I* declared thy wondrous works," the preacher using the psalmist's language in the hope that many here will make bold to come into the same lot, and take a share in the same heritage, that many here, especially many young people may say in after days, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

I. First, then, let us think of DAVID AS A PUPIL. God was his Teacher. "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth."

This shows that David had a teachable spirit; and if you had asked him where it came from, he would have said that *God gave him a teachable spirit.* God is not only the Teacher of our spirit, but he gives us a teachable spirit. Have we all received that precious gift? The "genius of the age" is against a teachable spirit. You would suppose now, to hear some men preach, that Christ said, "Go ye into all the world, and make critics of every creature, and they shall be saved thereby;" but that is not the gospel. I do not so much blame the age for its errors, as for the fundamental error of not being willing to be taught. Men have cast off authority; and wherein authority in religious things is not of God, it is well cast off; but I fear that, in casting off the evil, many have gone far towards casting off even divine authority. No, you are not to think what you like; you are not to believe as you please. No man may control you, but God has never given liberty to your thought or to your understanding to be free from his government. What he reveals, you are to accept; to take it as infallibly true, to bow the knee of your intellect before it, to believe that "He teacheth to profit," and to expect the fulfilment of the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

A teachable spirit, although it is despised by many, is a happy spirit; it is a growing spirit; it is a restful spirit; it is a heavenly spirit; and whoever has it, must ascribe the possession of it to the Spirit of God, who leads us into all truth, and makes us willing to be led therein. Oh, that we may have such a spirit, that we shall count it an honour to say, "O God, thou hast taught me"! Some would count that as a dishonour; they would say, "O God, even thou canst not teach us. There is more in our honest doubt than in all the faith thou canst give us," which, being interpreted, is a lie. No, dear brethren, let us seek and covet earnestly a teachable spirit, that, like David, we may be taught of God.

In David's acknowledgment, we learn that *God took him very early into his school.* "Thou hast taught me from my youth." What a mercy it is to begin to know God before we begin to know anything else! The first words of the Bible are very significant: "In the beginning, God." The first words of this Book should be the first words of every life-book: "In the beginning, God." Happy shalt thou be if thy first intelligible thoughts shall be of thy Maker, thy Benefactor, thy Friend. Happy shalt thou be, for, as thou shalt grow in understanding, thou shalt grow also in acquaintance with thy God, and every ripening faculty shall be sanctified as it opens, so that thy first morning shall have no dew but the dew of holiness and of divine life resting upon it.

Where was David taught in his youth? I suppose in the pastures of Palestine. When he was keeping his father's flock, he sat down, he thought, he meditated, he prayed. Beneath the stars, that looked down on him like so many eyes of divine love, he sat at night, and spoke with God, and God talked with him; and among the sheep he learned to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." There he learnt of God so well that, when a lion and a bear came against his flock, and took away a lamb, he fell upon the monstrous beasts, and, in the strength of God, tore them asunder; and he remembered to ascribe the glory of his deeds to God, and to praise his holy name. He spent his school-days well; he passed the highest standards; and he carried the certificates in the skin of the lion and the paw of the bear. Oh, blessed young man, so to be taught of God as to be equal to the duties of his station, and able to find God his strength in carrying them out!

David's words also mean that *God kept him in his school as a youth.* Generally, boys go to Sunday-school till they begin to feel themselves young men. You half insulted one just now when you called him a lad; he is "a young man", and his companion is not a girl, she is "a young woman." She could not go with girls now that she is a young woman; and these young people think they are too big for the Sunday-school; and very often here is the point where the Church of God loses touch of them. It was not so with David; he could say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." He kept on being taught as he grew up to be a young man. He still walked with God; and so well did he use his early lessons that, going to the army to meet his brothers, he saw the giant Goliath defying the armies of the living God, and he came forward, and said to Saul, "Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them;" and he puts in practice, as a young man, the lessons of his boyish days. Glorifying God, he slings his stone, and lays the giant low. How well did God teach him, by his many struggles, educating his faith, and increasing his graces! When he was at the court of Saul, he continued as a young man still to learn by the songs of those who said, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," and by the sneers of envious courtiers, ay, and even by the javelin of the jealous king, he kept on learning, and being taught of God, so that he behaved himself in a simple way in the sight of Israel, being instructed of the Most High.

When he became a man, even when he became a king, *he still continued to be taught of God.* With a crown on his head, he was still a scholar and disciple of the great God. Swaying a sceptre, he was still nothing but a child before a father when he thought of God. It is beautiful to notice, in David's life, how often he says, "Bring hither the ephod." He would know the will of God; he would listen to Nathan the prophet, he would enquire of the Lord's servants, that he might learn more of God. David, as a man, was taught of God, in his trials, in his crosses, in his comforts, by his friends, and by his enemies; he was always being taught of God. Sometimes, alas! he forgot his lesson, or he blotted his book; but he never left the school. He was chastened, but he was never cast out; he still continued as

God's pupil. We find him, as a grey-headed man, still penning his Psalms, and being taught of God, perhaps in his last days learning most, learning most sorrowfully, staining his book with tears, discovering more of himself and more of the mercy of God, more of the power of temptation and more of the power of the sacrifice that puts away sin, more of the wanderings of his heart and more of that free Spirit who upholds us, and makes us walk in the ways of God. He was always being educated. A Christian man has never finished his education till he stands before the golden throne of God.

There are many aged men who can say with David, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth." They find themselves learners yet, for they are "Unstable, weak, and apt to slide." O young people, you who are just beginning life, I do pray that you will begin learning soon enough to be able to say afterwards, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth"! There are some here who can never say that. Whatever becomes of them, however much God may bless them, they can never say it now, for they have reached the middle of life, and yet they have not gone to school to the great Teacher. Well, if you cannot say all that you could wish to say, may the Lord take you into his school now, though you are a ten o'clock scholar, and yet teach you, so that you shall learn enough music to sing among the angels to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has made you to be accepted in the Beloved! Surely, dear friends, we are so foolish that we need to be taught, and we cannot have a better teacher than the omniscient God. Let us, therefore, pray to-night, that if we are at God's school, we may keep there; and that if we are not there, we may go there at once. May all our names be put down in the roll of scholars of the College of Christ, the university of grace, this very night, and God shall have the praise!

II. But now I want you, for a minute or two, to notice DAVID AS A PUPIL-TEACHER. While he was a pupil, he was also teaching. He says, "Hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works."

Observe, then, that *David taught people what he saw*. He saw God's works all around him. Ah! me, that is a great sight. God is at work everywhere; and there are none so blind as those who will not see his works; but the mass of men do not see God. You see the working of machinery, you see the working of the laws of nature, you see the working of the laws of supply and demand; but many of you cannot see the working of God. The Lord open your eyes, poor blind bats, for if there is anything that stares in the face of the man who is willing to see it, it is God, and God at work in providence, in nature, in grace, and in all sorts of ways! I read of one, the other day, of whom somebody said that, when he stayed at his house, he noticed that he talked as if he saw God always before him; and truly that is how every Christian man should talk, for we should see God always before us. David said, "I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." We do not see God as we should, and we shall never teach aright for God, until we have a kind of instinctive feeling of the presence of God, till we are conscious that God is in us, and round about us, and at work for us.

God's work that David saw was very much work in himself, and work

for himself, and work in other men's hearts. Being taken into the school of God, he was made to observe things; he had object lessons put before him, and he learned to read God's work; and *as he saw it, he wondered.* "Hitherto," said he, "have I declared thy wondrous works." He who is a stranger to wonder is a stranger to God, for God is wonderful everyway, and everywhere, and everyhow. It is all wonders when you get near to God, and see what God does. And, you know, no man teaches a thing so well as when he is struck with it himself. When it astonishes him, he will then tell it to others with gusto and with emphasis. So David made a fine pupil-teacher, because, seeing God's work, he wondered at it, and spoke of it as a wondrous thing.

We find that *David took opportunity to declare God's wondrous work;* sometimes, with his pen, writing his Psalms; sometimes, with his voice, singing those Psalms; sometimes talking to a few, sometimes speaking to many. Now, dear friends, what I want you all to do is, if you have seen God's work, and have been struck with it, you should declare it, tell it to others. I know that some of you, at any rate, love God and fear him, but you never speak about him. Ah! me, have you a dumb devil, or are you possessed with a dumb spirit? The Lord cast it out of you! There is no way of learning so good as that of teaching. A young man, who was going to Cambridge, said, I think it was to Archbishop Whateley, that he was going to get a "coach", that is, a tutor, to coach him through his studies. "Do not do that," said the other, "Take a pupil; you will learn better that way;" and I believe that it is so. To teach, is a wonderful way of learning; that I know by experience. To read hard all day, and then, in the evening, to go and preach what you have read, will stamp it indelibly upon your memory, and lead you to a better knowledge of it than any other method that a philosopher could suggest. Therefore, first learn of God, and then teach to somebody else what you have learnt. You will keep it that way, you will never lose it. If you keep on only learning, and learning, and learning, and learning, your hoarding it up will breed mildew, and I know not what besides; but if you learn it, and then teach it, that will keep it sweet, and you will never forget it. This is David's pupil-teachership; he is being taught of God, and he is teaching others.

And David had this felicity, that he could say, "Thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works;" that is, he kept on teaching, and *he kept on teaching the same thing.* What must the ministries of some of our ministers be like? The first five years are spent in teaching Evangelical doctrine, the next five years are spent in pulling that all to pieces, the next five years are spent in teaching some new philosophy; no, not five years; they are not so long as that over any one thing; I mean, the first five months are spent in teaching some new philosophy, then a month in pulling that to pieces, another month in making a new theory, and another month in pulling that to pieces. Oh, what kind of a life must it be? "I never saw," said poor Richard, "an oft-removed tree, nor yet an oft-removed family, that throve." Surely an oft-removed doctrine, when a man is perpetually shifting the soil around it, can never thrive, or do much good. Here the great-hearted veteran says, "Thou hast

taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." All this he ascribed to God; he gave God the glory of his learning and of his teaching also; may you and I do the same! So far about David.

III. Now for a few words about myself for the honour and glory of God. I could not help saying something to-night about what Hugh Miller calls, "My Schools and Schoolmasters." "O God, thou hast taught *me* from my youth: and hitherto have *I* declared thy wondrous works."

I went down, last week, to Maidstone in Kent. It is as near as possible to the day, forty years ago, when I left the school called a "College" there. I thought that I must go down and look at the spot, and specially at a tree which stands by the river Medway. Under that tree I spent many hours, and many days, and even many weeks, reading all day long. "In school-time?" say you. Yes, my master thought that I should do better under that tree than in the class; and he was a wise man. He gave me my book, and left me to myself; and as I stood last week under that tree, with the smoothly-flowing river at my feet, I could thank God for his mercy to me for all these forty years, and I could say, "O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works." There may be some young people here to-night, just come back from school, some young people who are just finishing their school days. I would to God that they would spend some time in holy, quiet thought about their future, about whom they will serve, who shall be their Teacher, for whom they will become teachers, and how the life which has now become more public than before shall be spent.

As I stood there, last week, I could not help praising God that, not long after I left that school, he led me to faith in Christ, and to rest in him, and find eternal life; and I could not but thank God that I went to that school for twelve months. It was a Church of England school. I had never seen anything of Church of Englandism till that time; but there was a turning in my life, through being there, to which I owe my being here. The Church of England catechism has in it, as some of you may remember, this question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" and the answer I was taught to give, and did give, was, "Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament." I looked that answer up in the Bible, and I found it to be strictly correct as far as repentance and faith are concerned; and, of course, when I afterwards became a Christian, I also became a Baptist; and here I am, and it is due to the Church of England catechism that I am a Baptist. Having been brought up amongst Congregationalists, I had never looked at the matter in my life. I had thought myself to have been baptized as an infant; and so, when I was confronted with the question, "What is required of persons to be baptized?" and I found that repentance and faith were required, I said to myself, "Then I have not been baptized; that infant sprinkling of mine was a mistake; and please God that I ever have repentance and faith, I will be properly baptized." I did not know that there was one other person in the world who held the same

opinion; for so little do Baptists make any show, or so little did they do so then, that I did not know of their existence. So I feel grateful to the Church school, and grateful to the Church catechism, for what I learnt at Maidstone. I do not know that I have any vivid gratitude for any other question in the catechism; but I am very thankful for that particular one, for it led me where it was never intended to lead me by those who wrote it. It led me, however, as I believe, to follow the Scriptural teaching that repentance and faith are required before there can be any true baptism.

Well now, what shall be your schools and schoolmasters? Dear young people, I long that each of you may be able to say, "O Lord, thou hast taught me from my youth." You must, first of all, be taught by *the Holy Spirit*. He is willing and able to come into your mind, and to influence it in a very extraordinary but very effectual way. He can teach your reason, reason; and cause your understanding to understand aright. He can take away from you the bent of prejudice, he can remove from you the depraving influence of sin, and he can give you to understand those things which are essential to your peace, and eternal salvation. Seek the Spirit of God, then, to begin with.

Then your next school will be *the inspired Word of God*. Believe in this Bible from the first word of Genesis to the last line of Revelation. It will never mislead you; it has never misled anybody. It will tell you the truth as to your conduct, as to your condition before God, as to what you are to believe, and what you are to do. If you search well the Scriptures, if the law of God instructs you, and if the gospel of God teaches you, then God will be teaching you, for this is the school-book of the family of love; and they who will accept it, and believe it, shall be taught of the Spirit of God who indited it.

Have not all of us, who are in the school of Christ, learnt much, in the next place, from *the means of grace?* "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." I have to bear my willing witness to the benefit received in the congregation of God's people. "What!" say you, "Why, you do not hear any sermons!" No, I hear very few except my own, and they are not the best; but preaching them is probably of more service to me than hearing them is to you, for there is a care of the Word of God that is necessary, and the searching of it in the preparation of the sermon, and the waiting upon God for help in the service; all these have been to me a means of grace. Paul so regarded it when he said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." He found that it was a means of grace to him to be permitted to preach. Certainly, you young people must take care that you do not neglect the public services of God's house. They will teach you from your youth.

Another method of teaching is that of *observation of others*. If we would be taught of God, we must keep our eyes open, to see how he deals with others. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright." Watch the hypocrite. Keep your eye on the prosperous sinner. If you do, you will soon find God teaching you wondrous things.

You will also be taught by *conversing with the people of God*. Young Christian, get much with old Christians; I do not mean with all of

them. Some of them will not help you much; but I mean those who live near to God, and are real and genuine saints. Get to speak with them; tell them your difficulties, and ask them how they have got through the same trials. Compare the footsteps of the flock with your own footsteps. Many an old child of God will be a precious mine of instruction to you. The first lessons I ever had in theology were from an old cook in the school where I was an usher. She was a good old soul, and used to read *The Gospel Standard*. She liked something very sweet indeed, good strong Calvinistic doctrine; but she lived strongly as well as fed strongly. Many a time we have gone over the covenant of grace together, and talked of the personal election of the saints, their union to Christ, their final perseverance, and what vital godliness meant; and I do believe that I learnt more from her than I should have learned from any six doctors of divinity of the sort we have nowadays. There are some Christian people who taste, and see, and enjoy religion in their own souls, and who get at a deeper knowledge of it than books can ever give them, though they should search all their days. Get with such people of God, the experienced people, the tried people, and you will be able to say, "O God, thou has taught me from my youth."

Another schoolmaster is *self-examination*. A very sour, crabbed schoolmaster is this one. Very few like him; especially if you take a lesson every night before you go to sleep, and look through the actions of the day. It is not a very pleasant exercise; there are so many faults to find, so many mistakes made, so many good things omitted. But, if you cannot have self-examination every day, at any rate have it sometimes. You will learn better by your mistakes than if you had never made a blunder. Sometimes even a grave fault may save you from ten grave faults, if it be well observed, and avoided in the future, and God teaches you thereby. You learn nothing by self-examination unless the Lord be your Master; but, if he be with you, then your acquaintance with yourself will help you to an acquaintance with him. There are two prayers always worth praying, "Lord, show me myself," and "Lord, show me thyself." May both be heard, and you will be well taught of God!

But there is a school-house to which I have gone, and to which I expect to go again. I cannot commend it to you for its pleasant situation, or for the beauty of its architecture; it is called the school-house of *sore affliction*. Whoever does not go to that school, every minister whom God blesses to the salvation of souls will have to go there. It is an absolute necessity of a true shepherd of God's tried people that he should be tried. There may be exceptions, but I do not think that there are; and, dear friends, you, each one of you, if you are to be taught of God, will have to be afflicted. There are some truths that are never learned, I suppose they may be learned, but they never are, except in the dark. To-day, in the middle of the day, we could not see the stars; but if we had gone down a well, we might have seen them; and often the dark well-hole of affliction reveals stars of promise, and glittering truths, which else we never could have seen. I will appeal to my experienced brothers and sisters here. Have you not learned more in trial than anywhere else? Do

you not owe more to the hammer, the file, the anvil, and the forge than to all the comforts that you ever received? Here it is that God does really fashion us. Till he gets us into the fire, and the hammer begins to ring upon us, there seems to be no shaping us after the method of divine working.

And, dear friends, once more I come to a place on which I stood in the middle of the sermon, God has taught me, and he has taught many of us, by *setting us to work to bless others*. If any Christians cannot learn quickly, let them get to work for Christ, and they will soon learn. "Oh!" says one, "I am so full of doubts and fears." Get to work for the Lord. "Oh!" says another, "I never have much joy and peace." Get to work for the Lord. Another cries, "I am afraid that I am not saved; I am often afraid that I am not; and yet I do believe in Jesus Christ." Tell somebody else about Jesus Christ; do not think so much about yourself. That dog-hole of selfishness can never afford you any comfort. While the first and last concern of a man is simply his own feelings, or his own enjoyment, he cannot get any good feelings, or any enjoyment either. Recollect what the farmer does down in the country on a cold winter's day. There stand the boys, with chilblains on their hands, and they want to get at the fire. They cry out, "Oh, father, it is so cold!" He says, "You go and do a bit of ploughing, Johnny. You go and do a little hedging and ditching, William." And they come in with rosy cheeks, and they say, "The weather is beautiful, it is quite bracing, and we are all in a glow." And yet it may be that the thermometer has gone down while they have been out, but they have been warmed by their work. I wish I could turn some Christian people out of their pews, and get them at this time of night out into the lodging-houses, or in some corner preaching, or going to some sick persons in the hospital to read and pray with them. You may depend upon it, being taught of God is best done, all other things being equal, when, with a teachable mind towards God, we have a teaching mind towards others. When thou willest to bless thy fellow-man, thou shalt get a blessing. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed"—for himself? No, I have purposely made a mistake there; it is not so, just look it up: "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his"—well, it says, "friends"; but, you know, they were a curious kind of friends. Job called them "miserable comforters", and so they had been; but when he took to praying for them, then the Lord turned his captivity. Begin to pray for your disagreeable neighbours; begin to pray for your unconverted friends; and the Lord will turn your own captivity while you are doing that. By blessing others, you shall be blessed yourself. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—215, 697, 692.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM LXXVII.

This Psalm is headed "To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun." He was one of the great singers; there is opportunity given in the Psalms for each of the singers to take his turn; it does not do for any of us to be idle in reference to the praise of God. It is called, "A Psalm of Asaph." His Psalms have usually a dark tinge about them; he was a meditative man, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; but also a man of strong faith, and of an exulting spirit. You need to do business in great waters to understand Asaph; he is one who does not wade, but he gets into "waters to swim in." Thus he begins:—

Verse 1. *I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.*

The use of the voice in prayer is not essential; but usually, when men grow earnest, they use the voice as well as the mind. It was because of the intensity of his prayer that the psalmist felt compelled to cry, not to use stilted, stately language, but the natural cry of pain: "I cried unto God with my voice." You will find it very helpful in private prayer to use the voice; many of us do. Some have not the opportunity of doing so; but if you can be unheard of men, and can use your voice, you will find it helpful. Twice says the psalmist, "I cried unto God with my voice."

2. *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:*

This is the best place to go in the day of your trouble.

2. *My sore ran in the night,*

A better rendering would be, "My hand was stretched out in the night." The psalmist continued to pray.

2. *And ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.*

Rightly so, if the comfort came from man, if the comfort were doubtful and ineffectual; wrongly so, when right comfort was presented to him, comfort from God. I am afraid that, in the time of our trouble, we often increase it by being unwilling to be comforted.

3. *I remembered God, and was troubled:*

What! trouble even from remembering God? Then this is trouble indeed. And yet this has been the experience of the saints of God many a time: "I remembered God," his holiness, his justice, my offences against him, "and was troubled."

3. *I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed.*

Turned over, overwhelmed; without comfort, or hope of comfort.

3. *Selah.*

Screw up the harp-strings; they have gone flat through such hard striking. These deep notes have put the strings out of order. The man in his grief cannot sing well; and he had need to say "Selah." *Sursum corda.* Lift up the heart; prepare yourself again for song.

4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.*

Yet he was speaking; but it did not seem to him like speaking. It was rather an inarticulate wail than the language of a man.

5. *I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.*

A little holy history is good reading for a heavy heart. You will often stumble on a record of God's providential dealings, or a paragraph concerning his wonderful love, that will cheer your heart. Yet it did not cheer the heart of the psalmist just then.

6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night:*

"How I used to sing like the nightingale, with the thorn at my breast, I call that to remembrance." But we cannot always sing old songs. Old experiences may have but little fire in their ashes, though often in their ashes live their wonted fires.

6. *I commune with mine own heart:*

A very proper thing to do; but not much comfort generally comes of it. It is like stirring water that is already muddy; the more you stir it, the more muddy it becomes.

6. *And my spirit made diligent search.*

When a man can deal with himself like this, his trouble will not last long. God save me from a dumb sorrow, sorrow that cannot think, and cannot judge, and cannot weigh itself!

Now listen to the psalmist's questions. Does doubt question your faith? Then let faith question your doubts. Here is a catechism for a desponding heart. I commend it to you who are in trouble. Put your soul through its paces, ask these questions.

7. *Will the Lord cast off for ever?*

Has he ever done so? He may seem to cast off for a little while; but "Will the Lord cast off for ever?"

7. *And will he be favourable no more?*

It is a long lane that has no turning. The Lord may take down the rod; but will he always use it? Will he always chide?

8. *Is his mercy clean gone for ever?*

If his favour is gone, yet is his mercy gone? Does not the Psalm say, "His mercy endureth for ever"? If I cannot claim favour as a saint, may I not hope for mercy as a sinner? "Is his mercy clean gone for ever?"

8. *Doth his promise fail for evermore?*

Oh, what a question that is! God's promise may tarry, but it never fails; and if it seem to fail for the time being, will it fail for evermore?

9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?*

What hot shots these are for unbelief! I warrant you that, however deep your unbelief may be to-night, if, by earnest prayer, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you ply it with these questions, it will have to yield.

9. *Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.*

Can it be so? Was it ever so to any of God's people? Now comes "Selah" again. Turn those screws once more; put the harp-strings right again. We shall have sweeter music from this time.

10. *And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.*

"*But I will remember*" is added by the translator. Surely it was to the psalmist an infirmity to be thus in trouble; he called it Benoni, son of sorrow; but it was not infirmity to God; he called it Benjamin, son of the right hand. There is a sort of parallel between Asaph and the woman who named her child Benoni. Certainly it is a great infirmity, it is a sin, to doubt God, and to be cast down, and troubled.

11. *I will remember the works of the* LORD: *surely I will remember thy wonders of old.*

Think of what God has done for his people, how he has delivered them, how he has lifted them from the dunghill, and set them among the princes, even among the princes of his people. Think of his wonders of grace, and be no more discouraged.

12. *I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.*

Those who talk ought to meditate; otherwise they grind wind. Those who meditate will talk; otherwise the miller grinds only for himself.

13. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary:*

Or, "in holiness." God's way is always a holy way, a righteous way.

13. *Who is so great a God as our God?*

When we think of the greatness of God, if we simply dwell upon his power, we make a mistake. The greatness of God lies mainly in his moral attributes, in his completeness, his wholeness, his holiness.

14, 15. *Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.*

"Selah" again. In looking back, the psalmist has remembered the history of the whole nation. He thinks of what God did for his ancient people; indeed, he is on the verge of a great song; well may he tune the strings again. He has in thought gone back to the Red Sea. He is standing, like Miriam, by the waters that devoured the foes of Israel, and he must sing as she did. In a high poetic strain he writes:—

16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.*

At the very sight of God the sea began to flee, to lay bare its depths. "The floods stood upright as an heap," in their fear and dread of the presence of God, "and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea."

17. *The clouds poured out water:*

The floods above answered the floods below; and came to the help of the Lord, "to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

17, 18. *The skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.*

There was a great storm; thunder and lightning gathered about the sea. When God spoke, the waters rolled back, and swallowed up all the chivalry of Egypt. Heaven and earth joined in battle against God's foes; not only did the sea flee, but there appears to have been also an earthquake.

19. *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.*

Not foreknown. Who could have foretold that God would lead his people through the sea? His footsteps are not now to be found. God's ways we cannot guess; and even when we have seen them, we cannot understand them. Child of God, does the sea roll before you to-night? Are you in extreme distress? Are you crying as the psalmist did? With your voice do you cry unto God? Then expect deliverance from him.

20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*

Moses and Aaron did not lead them; God led his people, "like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Here the Psalm breaks off with great abruptness. Had it been a human composition, it would have been rounded off with great discretion; but God knows best where to stop. I sometimes wish brethren would do the same in their prayers; they need not keep on till they have worn us out; they may break off short if they like. So may we in our sermons; perhaps they would be better remembered if the second half was never spoken.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LORD'S CHOSEN MINISTERS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, JULY 30TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, June 23rd, 1889.

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." —Luke x. 21.

THE habitual state of mind of Jesus was, I think, a deep calm. Beyond all ordinary men, he possessed his soul in peace. We find him sleeping in the midst of a storm, the very best thing that he could do; he knew that, rocked in the cradle of the deep by his great Father, he was supremely safe; so, finding a pillow, and going near the stern of the ship, he fell asleep.

But there were times when his spirit ebbed out. He was always a Man of sorrows; the surface of his soul was often disturbed with storms of grief, and then we read that "Jesus wept." Sometimes, however, the tide was at the flood; and so we here read, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It is very seldom that we read this; so seldom did he show his joy that it was recorded at once by the Evangelist. Luke took care to note that, even as others had mentioned his tears. Jesus was a man of constant grief, a mourner all his days; and yet at times the deep calm of his spirit was stirred by something other than the north wind; the south wind blew, and all was joyous and bright with him: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I thought that this would be a profitable theme for meditation for a short time to-night, in contrast to that of this morning.* I do not intend to go so deeply into this subject as I did into that; but I think that there are some matters here which may be instructive to us.

I. First, let us ask, WHAT WAS THE OCCASION OF OUR MASTER'S JOY? "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." You may judge a man by his joy; as a man rejoiceth, so is he. What made Christ rejoice? If I were to put the question to all of you who are happy to-night,

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,091, "Jesus Wept."

"What makes you rejoice?" some might, perhaps, be ashamed to answer my enquiry; but there was no reason why Jesus should blush at that which made him glad.

First, I notice that *he rejoiced in stirring times.* He had sent out the seventy disciples; they had gone, in thirty-five pairs, all over the country, telling that he was coming, and he was reckoning upon going to every city and place to which he had sent his heralds. Seeing what was done, and what was going to be done, the Saviour's heart rejoiced. Some people like laziness; Christ loved activity. This morning I showed you that there was no indolence in him, for he wept; and that old word in-dolence means not grieving, does it not? But he did grieve, so there was no indolence in him in the old and literal classic sense, and certainly no indolence in him in the sense in which we now use the word. He could weep, and therefore he could work. He could feel, and therefore he could bestir himself; and in stirring times he felt himself glad. How some of us do long to see the Church of God fully astir! We seem to have a dreadful calm nowadays, like that of the "Ancient Mariner" when—

> "The very deep did rot.
> Alas, that ever this should be!"

We want the wind from heaven to stir our sails, and set the ship in motion; we need the breath of the Holy Spirit to speed us to our desired haven. It was not thus with Christ, for he rejoiced in times of activity.

He rejoiced, next, when *he was surrounded by faithful preachers.* There were seventy of his disciples; quite a little Conference! He felt himself in good company with the seventy, all faithful preachers of the Word, gathered around him. You say that it was not many. No, but it was a good beginning; it was a noble beginning that, out of a few disciples (and he had not many at most), he should be able to pick out seventy who were fit to be sent out to preach. They must have been a fine class of men, though they were simple-minded fishermen and peasants; and to find seventy of them who could be sent to preach, and declare that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, who were fit to be trusted with miraculous power, might well make him glad. Brethren, when we see plenty of preachers of the gospel, when we see the Lord calling one and another to go forth and proclaim his Word of grace, then do we also rejoice in spirit.

Jesus rejoiced also because *all these seventy had found a welcome.* It seemed rather an experiment to send out seventy unlettered men to proclaim the kingdom of God. It was like sending lambs into the midst of wolves. Would not some of them be stoned to death? When the muster-roll was read, would not one or two at least be missing? But no, "the seventy returned again with joy." They had all been welcomed. Everybody seems to have received them, and entertained them; and they came back in high spirits, and the Saviour, seeing them return thus, not as preachers without congregations, but itinerant ministers, who had been listened to everywhere with respectful attention, felt that he must also rejoice, so "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." It is of no use having ministers if they have nobody to

preach to; and it is very likely that, before long, we shall have more ministers than hearers, if things go on as they now go. We have so many of our brethren with marvellous gifts of dispersion, that we have seen magnificent congregations, that used to gather around earnest Evangelical preachers, scattered to the winds. There is nothing in that to rejoice over, except for Satan to rejoice; but when you see a people made willing, in the day of God's power, to listen to the heralds of the cross, then you may indeed rejoice.

Jesus rejoiced, further, because *he heard that the power of God had rested on them all.* The seventy had healed the sick, and to their own astonishment they had cast out devils, and they mentioned it with great exultation. "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." Oh, brethren, we need not rejoice because there are many professed preachers; and it might not be a sure ground of rejoicing if they all had congregations; but it is a safe reason for joy when the power of God rests upon them! Only give a man that old power of God with him, and I am not afraid but what he will have a congregation, and I am certain that grand results will come of his work. If God be with us, his Word which we preach cannot fail; it will not reach the ear only, but it will pierce the heart; it will waken the spiritually dead; it will turn hearts of stone to flesh. There is still a divine power going with the preaching of the Word of God. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; and when we see that that is the case, and that men and women are being converted, then I am sure that, like our Master, we shall do well to rejoice in spirit.

Further than this, our Saviour rejoiced in spirit because *he saw that Satan's kingdom was being shaken.* To fetch him down from his throne, is no small thing; how is it to be done? Well, the philosophers may try their magnetism, but the devil is proof against them; the orators and rhetoricians may try their rounded periods, and decorate their orations with quotations from the poets, but the devil never stirs for them; but preach Jesus Christ, say that his kingdom is at hand, proclaim that he is come to save the lost, and that whosoever believeth in him shall live eternally, in a word, preach up Christ, and you soon preach down the devil. He does not come down by slow degrees; he falls, like lightning, from heaven. You have seen lightning; you may have seen it in that great storm a fortnight ago; it took no time at all to come down from heaven. Just a flash, and it was here. So, where the gospel is preached with divine power, Satan comes down from his throne, in human hearts and human minds, as rapidly as the lightning-flash falls from heaven; and when we see his kingdom shaken, then, like Jesus, we rejoice in spirit.

Still, I do not think that I have hit the centre of the target yet. The Lord Jesus deeply rejoiced in spirit because of *the men by whom this work had been done.* What sort of men were they? Upon this I shall have to dwell a little further on. But there was this about them, they were glad to have been put into the King's commission. "The seventy returned again with joy." They had never been so happy before; this doing of the Lord's will had been a great delight to them. You could see it by the very spring of their feet, and the flash of their

eyes. They came back to their Master delighted; and Jesus caught the contagion of their joy, and he rejoiced in spirit. People who serve Christ willingly, who feel a delight in doing his will, are sure to bring delight to Christ's heart. Are you, dear friends, in your holy work, doing it with joy, or do you serve the Lord because you cannot help it, like slaves driven to their toil by the overseer's lash? Jesus cannot rejoice over you if that is the case; but if you can say, "I delight to do thy will," then you will make his heart rejoice.

He rejoiced in these men because, when they came back, having done wonders, they ascribed it all to him. They said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name." They did not begin to pilfer the glory and take the honour to themselves; Christ is glad to have a people who lay all the honour where it ought to be laid, and put the crown on the right head. I do believe that there is nothing that angers Christ more, in his ministers, than to hear them talk about what they have done, without duly ascribing all the glory to himself. When they do ascribe it to him, then Jesus rejoices in spirit.

But he rejoiced most of all that, of all these seventy, he could say that their names were written in heaven. It is an easy thing to become a preacher, or a teacher, an evangelist, or what not; but are our names written in heaven? As Christ would have us rejoice most over that, no doubt he rejoices most over it, when he sees that we not only have our names written down in the Clergy List, or our denominational Handbook, but that our names are really written among the living in Zion, those who are quickened by his grace, washed in his blood, and truly made to live by his Spirit. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I have shown you the occasion of his joy. When you have similar occasions, dear brothers, dear sisters, mind that you rejoice in spirit, too.

II. But now, secondly, WHAT WAS THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S JOY? "Jesus rejoiced in spirit."

The answer to this question is, first, that *it was spiritual joy*. There is a good deal of joy in the world, even among religious people, that could not be called spiritual. I am not certain whether all the expressions of joy one hears at some excited meetings are worthy to be put on the same heap with this joy of Christ. There is mental joy. There is a sort of physical joy, when one gets excited and stirred up; this is but bronze or silver; but spiritual joy is the gold of joy, and the gold of that land is good. If, down deep in his inner life, one's spirit can rejoice in God, he is the man who is like his Master when he rejoiced in spirit.

You who have the Revised Version, which often teaches us much, will, I dare say, be surprised to read in the margin the following rendering, "In that same hour he rejoiced by the Holy Spirit." That is a very remarkable rendering, and I think a correct one. That is the kind of joy that Jesus had, *joy wrought in him by the Holy Ghost.* The Holy Spirit was poured upon him without measure; and, as part of the fruit of the Spirit is joy, the Spirit gave him much joy, as well as much love. Beloved, pray God to give you joy by the Holy Ghost. All the other joy in the world, if heaped up together, would be only so much smoke and vapour; but joy in the Holy Ghost is

solid bliss, and lasting pleasure. Here you have the great ingots of joy. How ponderous they are, how precious they are, how immeasurably valuable, how infinitely beneficial! Joy by the Holy Ghost —often very calm and quiet, for "He leadeth me beside the still waters"; but a very wonderful joy, the joy of God, like the peace of God, which passeth understanding, this is a joy which passeth all measure or bound. That was the joy of Christ, spiritual joy, and joy by the Holy Spirit.

Notice, also, that *it was joy about others*, a perfectly unselfish joy. Jesus had seen others blessed, healed, prepared, instructed, made ready to hear more of the gospel; and he rejoiced in that. And he had seen others made useful. Oh, what a mercy it is when you can rejoice in other people's usefulness! Did God ever bless you very largely, and did there come along somebody whom he blessed more than you? Now, I am sure that you rejoiced in that other man's success if he was a hundred miles off; but I am not quite so certain that you rejoiced in it if he came into your Sunday-school, and had a class that took some of the scholars away from you. I am not quite certain that every minister in the world would leap for joy if a brother settled close beside him, and had twice as large a congregation as he had, and did ten times as much good. Hearts want a little schooling at such a time as that; for, as the stars love to shine, they sometimes like not only to shine out but to outshine. Now shine out as much as you like; but never mind about outshining, for that is emulation of a kind of which Christ will never approve. He rejoiced to see the seventy shining; he delighted to see them all useful. Pray for your brethren and sisters, that God may make them more useful than they are, and more useful than you are. Did not your Lord say, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father," as if it was a delight to the Master that his pupils should in some respects excel himself? Remember Moses, when they came to him, and said that Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp; those two fellows had not been properly ordained, yet they were prophesying in the camp! What did Moses say? "Stop them directly. They have not 'Rev.' before either of their names, and certainly they have not M.A., or any of the other letters of the alphabet, after their names; shut those fellows up"? No, no! Moses said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" And is not that what Christ would say, and have you say? Oh, let us have joy in our hearts when souls are saved, even though we may not be the instruments of their salvation, or any of our denomination, but somebody quite apart from us! God has blessed him; and God be blessed for blessing him!

Our Saviour's joy, again, was *quiet and devout joy:* "Jesus rejoiced in spirit." I do not find that he sang a Psalm, or even a hymn from Moody and Sankey, or that he took a timbrel and danced. I think it would have been very much out of place for him to have done that; for him it would have looked very eccentric. But our Saviour, when he rejoiced in spirit, prayed and thanked God. The same calm, which had sustained him in his seasons of sorrow, supported him in his hour

of joy, and kept him sober, still, quiet. The Lord give us much of this joy! Still waters, you know, run deep. Let me also say that deep waters run without din. When the river is very deep, there will not be half as much noise as when it is but shallow, and therefore rattles and raves over the stones which it scarcely covers.

Christ's was quiet and devout joy; and it was also *meek and lowly joy*. Though he rejoiced in spirit, what he said was, "I thank thee, O Father." There was no assumption, no taking of anything to himself. Did not he send out the seventy? Were they not called by him? Yes, but he said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Perhaps God would give us more joy if we were more meek when we had it; but sometimes, when our heavenly Father trusts us with a few jewels, we hang them in our ears, and are as pleased with them as children with new toys, and we forget our Father, and only remember how pretty we look, as we think. Then the Lord takes them away again. Many a child would have more sweets to eat if they did not make him sick; many a preacher of the gospel would have more success if it did not make him proud; and many a labourer for the Lord would bring more souls to Christ if there were not danger of his losing his own soul if he were much honoured in that way. Our Master, when he rejoiced in spirit, was as meek and as lowly as when he stood before his adversaries, and was led as a sheep to the slaughter.

III. But I must not detain you much longer; and therefore I come to the last point, which is the special one upon which I want to dwell at this time. WHAT WAS THE EXPRESSION OF OUR SAVIOUR'S JOY? When Jesus rejoiced in spirit, how did he show his joy?

Well, he showed it, first, by *thanks to his Father*. He said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." Oh, that our joy might never take the form of a foolish song, but might always be in the shape of thanksgiving or thanks-living, or both of them together,—a happy combination,—thanksgiving with the mouth, and thanks-living with the life! Our Saviour, I say, praised God when he felt joyful. Do you not think that that should be a lesson to us to try to be joyful before we praise God? Do you feel very dull and heavy? Well, sing; remember that the apostle James said, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." Psalms are best sung when the heart is glad; therefore seek to shake off your sadness when you come into the house of God; and before you begin to praise the Lord, endeavour to be joyful, cheerful, happy. Did I not say, the other day,—Do not leave your bedroom until you feel that everything is right between you and God? I would also add to that,—Do not begin to sing until your heart sings. Do try as much as possible to be glad. Does God want slaves to grace his throne? It is the heathen who cut themselves with knives, and think that their god is pleased with their misery; but our God delights in the joy of his people. Be glad before him. "Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms." Sing unto the Lord all ye people, and rejoice before him. The singing of God's praises should be accompanied with joy; and when there is joy, it should be attended with the singing of his praises.

But why does Jesus Christ thank God? What is his special object in thanking him? Well, he thanks him for a great truth that some of you do not like. I cannot hide it, whether you like it or not. *Jesus thanks his Father for the doctrine of election:* "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." With whom does the choice of men lie? With God; and in his choice his Son greatly rejoices. So let it be with us; let him do what he wills, and let us rejoice in him. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." Let him do whatever he wills, I know that it is right. It is not for us to judge God's conduct, but to let God's conduct be to us the rule of our life, the rule of right.

> "He sits on no precarious throne,
> Nor borrows leave to be;"

nor does he stand at your bar, or mine, to ask us what he shall do, or what he shall not do. "He giveth not account of any of his matters;" and over the head of us all there rolls the thunder of this word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." No claim can be set up by the creature; none have any merit whatever before him; and, therefore, with that absolute sovereignty which he claims as God, he distributes his favours according to this rule, "Shall I not do as I will with mine own?" But many hearts cannot bow to that law; the iron sinew of their neck will not bend to a God who is God. A nominal god is all very well; but a real God of infinite power and divine sovereignty is rejected by many, but not by his dear Son. He says, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." We who truly know the Lord, adore the God of electing love. He cannot do wrong; he must be right; and if he chooses to let the wise and prudent be blinded, while he opens the eyes of babes, we thank him. What we do not understand, we accept with reverent adoration.

The Saviour especially *thanks his Father for the chosen ministers round about him.* Somebody might have said, "Why, these seventy, you are their Leader; but they are a precious poor lot! Look at them; put the whole seventy together, and they would not make one man of the size of a Pharisee, either in property, or in propriety, or in power to boast, and say that they have kept the commandments from their youth up. Why, they are a parcel of sinners, the whole seventy of them! And besides that, look at their coats, nothing but working-men's jackets. There is one of them, Peter, who has an extra coat; but he is only a fisherman. What a lot they are! And these are the men who are to proclaim the religion that is to conquer the world! It is certainly not abreast of the times; it is not up to the modern thought of this period; very far from it. All that it has gathered is a parcel of poor, illiterate persons."

Well, the Saviour thanks God that he has not given him any wise men. He thanks God that he has not saved any of the people who think that they have great understanding. He congratulates himself that, upon the whole, he has the people he likes best: "I thank thee,

that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto"—what? Well, he says "babes." They cannot say anything worse than that of the Lord's chosen ministers, just a lot of babies. Jesus thanks God that he has revealed the truth to these babes; and so do I. Oh, beloved, what a mercy it is that the Lord does, by his grace, call these babes, while the wise men, and the understanding men, are not called!

Suppose the very wise and prudent had been called to go and preach, what would they have done? Why, in the first place, they would not have gone at all, because any prudent man would have said, "He sends us forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. That is not prudent, so I shall not go." Certainly no wise men would have gone upon such an errand; they would have said, "No, thank you." And so you find the wise and prudent still. They will not go on Christ's errands; they have errands of their own, they have plenty of their own work to do, they are going to reform the world by their own inventions. But to go on Christ's errands, and simply to say what Christ tells them, oh, no, not they! They have such a lot to say of what they have made out of their own heads that they cannot go out to repeat simply what Christ has said to them.

Suppose, again, that the seventy had been wise and prudent men, what next would they have done? Why, they would have tinkered the message, for certain. There is one of them who would have said, "Well, now, I am going, you see, to a town of very respectable people, I must tone my message down for them." Another would have said, "I am going where they are rather a democratic set; I must introduce a little bit of politics of a popular kind to suit them." Another would have said, "Well, now, these people will not come and hear me preach the gospel, so I shall have an entertainment, a penny reading, or something of that kind." All the wise and prudent would have thought that they could do better than Christ told them to do; therefore he was very glad that he had not any of them to pester him. He had only these who would do just what he bade them, and say just what he told them; and that was exactly the kind of people that he needed, men who would do his bidding without a question.

Then, besides that, if they had been very wise and prudent, they would have inevitably clouded the message, for they would have delivered it in their own grand style; and you know how wise men talk, do you not? Unless you are a very wise man, you cannot understand them. But these poor babes, when they went into a town, talked as the people talked, and everybody could comprehend them. Nowadays, it is thought to be an evidence of want of education if you talk so that everybody can comprehend you; but, dear friends, we are not afraid of what anyone says on that point. Depend upon it, the best education in the world is that which enables you to convey your thoughts to other people's minds in a way in which you really get them into their brains. These babes went and preached what Christ told them, because they did not know anything else. They were men of plain speech; they were Galileans; they had never learned the scholastic style of speech—Galilee was a notable place for spoiling the language. These were rough-hewn men; and they spoke out their

message with all their might, and Christ was very thankful that they were not other than they were, for they did his work right grandly.

Besides, I think that, if they had been wise and prudent, they would not have come back rejoicing; they would have come back with that cold propriety which is most consistent with the dignity of cultured intelligence! Are you not all aware that it is vulgar to be happy, that it betrays the feebleness of your minds if you enjoy anything? The proper thing is to pick the truth to pieces, and find all the fault that you can with it. When the bread of heaven is set before you, if you are a cultured person, you should not eat it, but try to find out who baked it, and whether they put as much yeast in it as usual. Such people always quarrel with the truth if they can. Sometimes I take up a commentary on some part of the Bible, and think that I am going to learn something; and so I do, and when I have learned it, I wish that I had never seen it. A vain attempt is made to take the juice out of God's wheat, and to reduce it to dry, useless husks, which cannot cheer the heart, or comfort the spirit. I thank thee, Lord, when I get away from these gentlemen, even as thou didst thank thy Father that there were none of them around thee, for they would have been almost enough to chill the very life of Christ himself.

Once more, if they had all been wise and prudent, they would have come back, every one of them taking a little of the praise. One wise man would have said, "I put that point beautifully down at Chorazin." Another would have said, "I drew a wonderful distinction down at Bethsaida." "If any good comes of this," another would say, "it was that wonderful peroration of my discourse that did it. I must have the credit of it." These poor babes could not think or talk like this; for, if God did anything by them, they were such nobodies, that he must have all the glory.

Now I have done when I just say to you that I wonder whether this brings comfort to you. One poor soul says, "I am not clever; I cannot be saved." Why not? Why not, when God hath chosen the foolish things of this world? I often hear a person say, "But I have not head enough for these things." You do not want a head so much as you want a heart, for the grace of God works on the heart first, and on the head afterwards. When the head drags the heart, it is often slow work; but when the heart goes first, and the head follows, then it is a blessing indeed. If you love Christ, and trust in him, you have all the head that you want for eternal life. "Oh!" says one, "but I am a person of such small capacity." Never mind, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners," whether they are of large capacity or small capacity. Have you a teachable spirit? Are you willing to believe what the Holy Spirit reveals? Are you willing to sit at Jesus' feet, and learn of him? Are you like the babe that does not doubt its mother, but takes unquestioningly the nourishment she gives? If that is so, you are of the kind that God hath chosen. Come you at once to him. You cannot understand all mysteries if you want to do so. Give up all your vain attempts to sweep the cobwebs from the sky, or to climb up among the stars. Oh, the questions that people can ask you when they really do not want

answers, and if they did, would never receive them! I know some who are lost in their thoughts—

> "Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute;"

or some other tremendously knotty question. Why do you get out of your depths? Be a babe, and come, and simply believe yourself to be a sinner, and trust Christ as your Saviour, and you will know more than all the philosophers can ever teach you. Come and trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will find how true it is that he hath revealed these things unto babes. Are you willing to be what Christ was? He was the childlike man. He is called, "The holy child Jesus." Will you be a child to him, and let him be a Man for you? Will you take his book, and believe it as you read it? Will you take himself, and trust him as you find him? Will you take his cross, and rest upon it as your only hope? Then, blessed are you, for you are in the election of grace; you are one of those whom God has chosen, and for whom Christ thanks him that he did choose people of that quality; and while Christ thanks God, you may thank him, too, and go home to-night rejoicing. If you are too wise, too clever, too critical, to trust Christ, there is no other way to heaven; so you see where you must go. The Lord change your foolish opinion, and teach your reason, reason, and your sense a little common-sense, and save you, for his mercy's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE X. 1—22.

Our Lord was about to send out seventy disciples to preach the gospel. He had already chosen his twelve apostles; now there must be seventy disciples, something like Moses had seventy elders to serve under him. Some have fancifully likened these two sets of men to the twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees at Elim; and certainly they were for the refreshment of the people.

Verse 1. *After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come.*

They were to go before Christ, and be his heralds. What a mercy it is when the preacher knows that his Master is coming after him, when he can hear the sound of his Master's feet behind him! What courage it gives him! He knows that, though it is very little that he can do, he is the thin end of the wedge preparing the way for One who can do everything.

2. *Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.*

The seventy were very few compared with the many that were needed. There were many loiterers about then as there are now; but the labourers were few. There were preachers of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they were not worth a penny a hundred; but the true labourers, who watched for souls, and preached Christ with all their hearts, were very few. It is the same to-day; and therefore we are to pray for more labourers. A good minister always desires to see more good ministers. In a trade,

every tradesman would be glad if those of the same trade as himself would move to another parish; but in the profession of a Christian minister, the more the merrier. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest."

3. *Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.*

"Defenceless, harmless, into the midst of those who would devour you if I did not send you. It would be foolhardiness to go on your own account; but *I* send you; and he who sends his lambs among wolves will take care of them." As I have often reminded you, the lambs and the sheep are very defenceless; and yet, after all, there are more sheep in the world than there are wolves; and although it looked as if the wolves would soon devour the sheep, the wolves are extirpated in many a country, and the sheep are still prized; and it will be so till the end.

4. *Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes:*

This time, when Christ sent out the seventy, he bade them take no provision, for they might depend upon the kindness of the people. Afterwards, when he was about to leave his disciples, he bade them take both purse and scrip, for they were going among an unfriendly people; but on this first mission he knew that there was a kindly feeling towards them, so he said, "Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes."

4. *And salute no man by the way.*

Eastern salutations by the way took up a very long time, the people saying a lot of fine nothings to one another. Christian ministers ought to be excused from many of the lengthy courtesies of life; and if they are not excused, if they are faithful, they will take French leave to be excused. We have not time for all those pretty things that some people attend to. If we are to win souls, we must go to work like the king's couriers, who turn not aside to attend to anything else, but devote all their energies to the mission on which they are sent.

5, 6. *And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And if the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.*

So that it will not be wasted. Wish well, and your well-wishing will do you good, even if it does nobody else good. Our chickens come home to roost. If they be curses, they will come upon ourselves; if they be blessings, they will bless ourselves as well as others.

7, 8. *And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the labourer is worthy of his hire. Go not from house to house. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you:*

The Jewish Rabbis, in their perambulations, were very particular about food; it is said to have been very difficult to find a dish to their taste. This might be unclean in one way, and that not up to the mark in another; but here the Master exempts his ambassadors from attention to these minor matters. They had something better to do than to be always careful about what they should eat or what they should drink, so he said to them, "Eat such things as are set before you."

9—11. *And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.*

We are not to stop and argue; that is no business of ours. We have to tell our message. If men will receive it, we are glad; if they will not hear it, with a heavy heart we turn aside, and go elsewhere. Our work is

to proclaim the glorious message of mercy through a dying Saviour, salvation through the great atonement; it is our business to proclaim it and leave it, the responsibility of receiving or rejecting it rests with our hearers.

12—14. *But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you.*

Hearing and rejecting the gospel is the crowning sin of all. Whatever else men are guilty of, if they have not rejected Christ, they have not yet reached the summit of iniquity.

15, 16. *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell. He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.*

If the messenger delivers his message correctly, and as his Master would have him deliver it, the rejection of it, when brought by him, has the same guilt in it as the rejection of Christ himself, and the rejection of Christ is the rejection of God; so Jesus tells us here.

17. *And the seventy returned again with joy,*

Not one of the lambs had been eaten by the wolves.

17. *Saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.*

Christ had not mentioned that in the commission. He sent them to heal the sick. The casting out of devils was included, no doubt, but it was not specifically mentioned; and this being an extra beyond the words of their commission, they were especially delighted with it: "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."

18—20. *And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.*

That is a higher privilege than to be master over demons, or to be able to tread on serpents. That day of miracles is past; but the power of the gospel is a spiritual power the same as before. We still cast out devils; still are men delivered from the dominion of Satan.

21, 22. *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father;*

You know that he is the Son of God; you know that he is Jesus of Nazareth; but you do not know him, you cannot know him, as his Father knows him. He is known in his fulness only to the Father.

22. *And who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.*

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" No, thou canst not. The Son of God must reveal his Father to thee, or thou wilt never know him.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—231, 247, 233.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE BELOVED PASTOR'S PLEA FOR UNITY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 6TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 7th, 1889.

"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."—Romans i. 7.

IN a few minutes we shall gather together as members of the Church of Christ to celebrate the memorial of his death. It is a memorable sight to see so many Christian people sitting together with the object of observing this ordinance. Frequently as I have seen it, I must confess that, when sitting in the chair at the head of the table, I often feel overawed with the remembrance that it is the largest gathering of Christians anywhere beneath the sun, and that they have come there with one common object, namely, to show our Lord's death "till he come." The question then rises in our minds whether there is real fellowship in all this, for if there is not, it is a great sham; and the more numerous we are, if we have not fellowship with Christ, and with one another, the greater is the deception; it is only having a name to live while we are dead. So I want to-night, not so much to preach to you, as to exhort you, who are about to gather to this holy festival, so to think that your thoughts shall go out toward all your Christian brethren, and that you shall feel the power of that precious blood which makes us nearer akin than even the blood of Adam, that blood of Jesus, which makes us truly brethren and sisters, yea, members of one body, and so united by living communion the one to the other.

In this first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, you see the spirit of communion in the apostle Paul. He was, he says, anxious to do good to others. He longed to see the Roman Christians, in order that he might impart to them some spiritual gift. While he is writing to them, you can see that he is anxious that they may have the best thing that they can have. All his desire is for their good; he is lovingly interested in their welfare. That is how we ought to be the one to the other, not only the pastor to the people, but the people to the pastor, and the members of the church the one towards the other,

all anxious for the good of the rest; no man living unto himself, but each one endeavouring to live for the benefit of the entire community in Christ Jesus.

Not only did the apostle's heart go out to the church in Rome, but to all the Gentiles. He felt himself, he says, a debtor to everybody, to the Greeks and to the barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise, to the bond and to the free. Do you not think that our loving sympathies should go out towards all mankind? Oh, let them do so! While you have the nearest and closest fellowship with the saints, yet desire to recognize your kinship with the rest of men, praying to God that he would enlighten them, and bring them also within the bonds of the covenant, that your fellowship with them might be loving, and true, and deep.

However, the apostle especially expresses his fellowship with the saints in Rome, and to prove that fellowship he calls them by endearing names, by the highest titles which they could have, "beloved of God, called to be saints;" and then he salutes them with good wishes of the very sweetest, tenderest kind, when he says, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." While I am trying to talk on this text, will our dear brethren and sisters' hearts be going out the one towards the other, with a view to the increase of real spiritual communion in this church, and also in every branch of the one Church of Christ throughout the world?

First, notice, concerning these people, *their favoured condition:* "beloved of God;" secondly, *their sure proof of that favour:* "called to be saints;" and, thirdly, *their blessedness through that favour.* Paul wished them to have what he was allowed to wish for them, for it was truly theirs, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

I. First, then, notice concerning these people, THEIR FAVOURED CONDITION. They are said to be "beloved of God."

I wish that I could hope that this was true of everybody here, in the fullest and most emphatic sense, that we were all "beloved of God." There is a sense in which it is true, for God has a love of benevolence, and kindness, and well-wishing towards all his creatures. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and makes his rain to fall upon the field of the miser as well as on the ground of the gracious. He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." God is willing that all should come to him, repent of sin, believe in Jesus Christ, and find eternal life. We are all, in some respects, partakers of the love of God.

But, dear friends, there is a love to Peter which is greater than the love which Christ had to Judas. There is a love which he has to his own, which is of peculiar character, and differs very greatly from that common love which he bestows upon all the works of his hands, for there is *a love of choice*, and it is in this sense that Paul calls these Roman saints "beloved of God." God had chosen them; his prescient eye had foreseen them, and their condition, and he had selected them out of the mass of the Roman population that they might be his own. Whatever may be said about the doctrine of election, it is written in the Word of God as with an iron pen, and there is no getting rid of it;

there it stands. To me, it is one of the sweetest and most blessed truths in the whole of Revelation; and those who are afraid of it are so because they do not understand it. If they could but know that the Lord had chosen them, it would make their hearts to dance for joy. The Lord has a people in this world, whom he has himself chosen, and given to his Son Jesus Christ, and whom the Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed from among men, for Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it." These are the people of whom Paul speaks as beloved of God, those who have been, by divine grace, chosen out of the great mass of mankind. Beware, I pray you, of that desperately evil thing which is everywhere now, "the Christian world." There is no mixture that can be so bad as that. If it be the world, it is the world; if it be Christian, it is not the world; and the two things cannot be bound together. There is a divorce proclaimed between the two. Our Lord Jesus proclaimed it when he said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and he was never of the world. Nobody ever thought that he was of the world; and so his followers, if they are true to him, are not of the world. They are of another race. As the apostle John says, "Ye know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." It is not, as some one said the other day, "a redeemed world"; it is a world that lieth in the wicked one, as a child lies in its father's arms. There is a redeemed people in it, whom Christ is calling out by his own wondrous and sovereign grace; but we are not to look upon them as tasting of the benefits of his redemption in any saving way until he calls them to faith in himself, and brings them to be washed in his precious blood. Then may they, indeed, be called "beloved of God."

These are, again, beloved with *a love of resolve*. He determined concerning those whom he loved that they should be saved, that they should repent, that they should accept the great Sacrifice. He ordained them unto eternal life, and he resolved so to work upon them that, while he did not violate the freedom of their wills, or treat them otherwise than as men, yet still he would accomplish his purpose with them, he would create in them a new heart and a right spirit, he would turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to himself. These were the beloved of the Lord.

And in consequence they came to be the beloved of God in another sense, namely, with *a love of complacency*. The Lord cannot love a wicked man with the love of complacency. He takes no delight in him; he cannot even look on him without abhorrence, for he provokes the Lord to anger by his iniquity. But there are men in the world in whom the Holy Spirit has wrought principles which delight God. He has given them a character which is pleasing to him. They are his Hephzibahs; his delight is in them. There are some, of whom he thinks with pleasure, though they were once sinful and vile as others. He has transformed them into new creatures in Christ Jesus, and now he delights in them. I do not know a more joyful thought than for a man to be led to believe that God takes complacency in him, and looks at him with the eye of loving approval. Such as he are the beloved of the Lord.

And because of this, dear friends, there was also *a love of unity*.

God joins himself to the man in whom he takes delight. There is a friendship between them more close than that between David and Jonathan, so that God speaks with his servant, and hears what his servant has to say in reply. There are men who are on such intimate terms with God that they might be called the friends of God, as Abraham was; and God is both their shield, and their exceeding great reward. Oh, did some of you know what a joy it is to be the beloved of the Lord, you would reckon yourselves to be wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, while you are without him; and you would reckon that, even if you were poor, and blind, and naked, yet you would not be wretched and miserable if you did but know this wondrous love of God, which leads to the friendship of God, and to fellowship with God. There are many men and women, nowadays, thank God, who have a place where they are accustomed to meet with God, quite as regularly as they meet with their fellow-tradesmen at their stall or at their office. They keep tryst with God; and it would be a doleful day to them if, on any occasion, they should go to wait upon God, and find that he had closed the door against them. Yes, we have in London, and all over the world, a multitude who may truly be called the beloved of the Lord.

This is a very choice privilege; if you possess it, prize it beyond everything else. This is a crowning honour. Perhaps, if you were invited to attend the Queen, you might think something of it; but what would that be compared with being beloved of God? To have the love of our fellow-men, is very sweet; there are times when it comes with peculiar pleasantness; but oh, believe me, all the loves of all relationships, all the loves of all friendships heaped together, can never be compared with the love of God to us! All the goodness that there is in human love is derived from the love of God; and is at best but as a drop compared with the boundless ocean. If thou art beloved of God, I will not stay to ask whether thou art rich or poor, or even whether thou art in good health or in sickness, neither will I enquire whether thou art in honour or in disrepute, or whether thy life is likely to be long or to be suddenly cut short. All these things are but trifles; this is the solid fact that makes thee a happy and a blessed man, that thou canst be called "beloved of God."

Now the sweet thing here is that, if I am beloved of God, and you are beloved of God, here is a ground for us to meet. If you have not yet learnt to know your brother, if he is a stranger to you, and if, because of this, no love has actually sprung up in your heart, yet, since Christ loves you, when you hear that Christ loves him, why, then you will seem at once knit to him! I recollect that, when I first came to London, I used to think a great deal of everybody who came up from Waterbeach. I believe that, if a dog had come up from Waterbeach, I should have fed him; and I think that, if anybody comes from where Christ is, the Christ who loves us, we shall be sure to love him. They who are beloved of God will love all others who are beloved of God. "But they are American friends." Never mind whether they are American or Dutch; if the Lord loves them, we love them. "Oh, but they live so many thousands of miles away; and they never come here." Never mind; what if seas and mountains

divide us, yet are we one, and he who loves us loves them also. I am sure that I appeal to you with no doubt as to what your answer will be. If God has put us within the same circle of his infinite affection, may we not safely clasp hands feeling that we shall never have to unclasp them, nay, not even in death? The relationship between a husband and a wife, between a mother and her son, may be snapped entirely by death, never to be renewed; if there is no grace in the heart of the husband or the child, the weeping and the wailing will be useless at the last. They are parted, never to meet again; think of that, you who are still unsaved. But if we are one in Christ's love, we may have to bid "Good-bye" to one another here on earth for a time; but it is only for a time. Those bands, of which the love of God is the raw material, are everlasting. Some of you to-night, when I break the bread, will have to go upstairs, or to go home. I very often meet with good men, who come to join the church, and who say, "Nothing decided me till I had to leave my wife behind me, or when I stopped in the top gallery, and looked down upon her, and felt that I could not come and eat with her the memorial of the Lord's death. Then I felt that I could not hold out any longer." Oh, may you have that union in the love of God which never will be broken! Seek it to-night. May we all, in these two galleries, and this great area, be encompassed within the circle of the "beloved of God"!

II. Now, my second head is, THEIR SURE PROOF OF THAT FAVOUR, for they were "called to be saints": "beloved of God, called to be saints."

What were these people to whom Paul wrote? First, *they were saints.* You notice that the words "to be" are put in by the translators; but though they are supplied, they are not really necessary to the sense. These believers in Rome were "called saints." They were not called because they were saints; but they became saints through that calling. Now, here is a name that belongs to all the people of God; they are saints. It is not merely "St. John", and "St. James", and so on, as some foolish people talk, who cannot call Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, by their right names, but must always "Saint" them. I believe that there is a St. John; I dare say that there are twenty St. Johns in this Tabernacle to-night. I believe in St. Matthew; I expect that there are two or three St. Matthews here to-night. All the people of God, all who are really believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are saints. They are all of them called saints, and we may call them so.

Is not that very wonderful, that these Romans should be called saints, for they were not saints once? The Romans were among the worst of mankind. This first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is one of the most awful that ever fell from a human pen; it so describes the infamous crimes of the Gentiles, that we might almost blush to read it in the presence of a congregation; and such were some of these people, but grace came and renewed them, and they were called saints, and really were saints, that is, dedicated persons. A saint is a person who is set apart unto God, consecrated to God, sanctified, separated, a man who is in the world, but not of it; he belongs to God, and he lives for God. Now, if God loves you in the sense in which we have

been speaking, he has made a saint of you, a dedicated man. You remember that Jonah was asked, "What is thine occupation, and of what people art thou?" and he answered, "I am an Hebrew; and I fear the Lord." That was his occupation; he was a God-fearing man. It is not every man who could give such an answer as that. When we feel that our very occupation is to serve God, then are we rightly "called saints", sanctified, set apart ones.

But the word "saints" really means also holy persons. If we are the beloved of the Lord, he will make us holy persons. There is a very wide difference between that and being merely moral. Here is a man who calls himself a saint, and he is not honest; do not call him a saint, he is not even a respectable sinner. Here is a man who says he is a child of God, and yet he is guilty of lewdness. Call him a saint, when even common morality is absent? Dear friends, all the charity we can possibly pump up will not allow us to call that man a holy man who is not even a moral man. What is holiness, then? It rises above morality as much as the heaven rises above the earth. Holiness is a more spiritual, a more intense, a more divine, a more heavenly thing than morality; but he who has not morality certainly falls very short of anything like holiness. We are called not merely to be moralists, but to be saints. If you go, to-morrow, into some place of amusement, where there is something not quite clean, something full of levity, I should like somebody to whisper in your ear, "Called to be saints;" or, if to-morrow, in business, you should lose your temper, and begin to speak rather strongly, I should like something, even if it were only a parrot, to say, "Called to be saints;" and if, when you go home, you begin to be very rough to the children, unkind to the wife, and not what you should be even to the servant, I should like you to hear a voice saying, "Called to be saints." It might make you blush, if you can,—there are some who cannot,—but every man, who professes to be a child of God, should recollect that this is what his calling is, and he cannot prove that he is beloved of God unless he can prove his calling to saintship by being really a saint. Oh, that we had a church all made up of saints! Our churches, nowadays, are very respectable communities, I do not doubt, and there is a good deal of sainthood in them; but, oh, if they were all saints, then indeed we should tell upon the world, and tell upon the age, and the kingdom of our Lord would come! They were saints, then, to whom Paul wrote.

He also says that *they were "called to be saints."* They were not saints originally; they were "called to be saints." They were not saints by their own native growth, they did not grow up into saints; they were "called to be saints." They were called of Christ himself. Read the sixth verse: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." Being called by Jesus Christ, they were called by a voice which they recognized, a voice to which they yielded, a voice that spoke effectually, a voice that spoke transformingly; and they were called by him to be saints. Have you ever had such a call, my dear hearer? Sitting in your pew to-night, can you remember when that call came to you, as real a call as when God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees, a call from heaven, mysterious, divine, which nobody

else could hear, but which you heard and obeyed? "Called to be saints."

Now, then, see a ground of our communion one with another. If I have had a call to be a saint, I should not like to talk much about that to some people whom I know, for they would call it fanaticism. If you have had a call to be a saint, you have been very much in the same state; but when you and I meet together, we are not afraid to talk about it. You understand it, and I understand it; and on the ground of having had a common call, we feel ourselves at home. We are brothers and sisters at once, because we are equally "called to be saints." You cry and you sigh for saintship, and your friend cries and sighs for saintship, too. He is conscious that he comes short of his own idea of it; he struggles, he groans. You and he have a secret between you; your experience is his experience, and you two feel, having equally received a call from God, and a call for the same purpose, that you should both become the same thing, namely, saints unto God. Here is ground for fellowship. The lambs can have no fellowship with the wolves; let them keep together, and have fellowship one with another. You who love God will not find much fellowship up and down these streets. In many of the houses, if you were to speak of God, they would ridicule you. Get all the fellowship that you can one with another. Let it be said of you, as of those of old, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name." I like to think of this, that as we are one in being the beloved of the Lord, so are we one in the outcome of it; we have all been called, and we have all been called to the same high attainment of saintship. Paul does not say that he alluded to "the upper ten" at Rome; no, but he says, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God." Do not you go about, and pick out a few of the best Christian people, and say, "I am in sympathy with them." Ah, dear friends, this is not like Christ; he washed his disciples' feet, but you are for looking up at their heads! Go and begin fellowship with him by washing his dear feet. Where there is *aliquid Christi*, as a good man used to say, anything of Christ, there should your love go forth. Where there is any work of Christ upon the soul of anyone, however uneducated, however poor, however rough he may be, ay, and however bad-tempered he may be, nevertheless endeavour to get to maintain and to increase fellowship with him, seeing that you and he have one calling, you are both "called to be saints."

III. Now I come to a close with the third point, where I think we shall also find some ground for fellowship, THEIR BLESSEDNESS THROUGH THE FAVOUR OF GOD. This was the same with regard to all to whom Paul wrote: "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

First, these good people had this blessedness, *they all had the same Father*. Suppose that two persons were to meet here to-night, who did not know each other, and they were to begin to talk to one another, and one said, "My father's name is So-and-so," and the

other were to look at him, and say, "And where does he live?" "He lives at such a house, in such a city." "Does he? Why, do you know, that is my father?" Those two would be surprised that they did not know each other, for they evidently had the same father. I can see them backing a bit, and looking at one another, and saying, "Do you mean to say that really his name is John Smith?" "Yes." "And he lives at such a house?" "Yes." "What age is he? What kind of a man is he? Have you his portrait about you?" "Yes." "There, I have a good portrait of him, too, and it is the same man. He is father to us both; then what are we two?" "We are brothers;" and they put their arms about each other's neck, and say, "What have we been at, that, having the same father, we did not know each other?" Now, there are many Christian people who, if they came right, would be in much the same condition. They have the same Father, and do not know it, because they do not quite agree, perhaps, upon some form of doctrine, or even upon the rite of baptism, or something of that sort, which is of very great importance, but still the most important thing is,—Have we one Father? If we have, then let us have fellowship one with the other. I want this to be real. When I was very young, and first joined the church in Cambridge, I sat in a pew at the communion with a gentleman, perhaps with two or three, but none of them spoke to me. The next time I went to the communion, it was the same, nobody spoke to me. I was not anybody to be spoken to; so when I got outside the chapel, I said to one gentleman, "Well, dear sir, how are you?" He said, "I am pretty well, thank you, but you have the advantage of me." "I do not think I have, sir; I do not know you any more than you know me; but I came to the communion-table to profess that I was a brother of those who were there, and I meant it; did not you mean it?" He put both his hands on me, for he was much older than I was, and he said, "What sweet simplicity! You have only acted according to truthfulness. I am glad," he added, "that you did not do it to our deacon." The next thing he said was, "Will you come in and have a cup of tea with me?" I said, "Thank you, sir, I could not do that to-night, because I am expected home at the place where I live." "Will you come in next Sunday?" "Yes." I continued to go in every Sunday as long as I could, and he remained, and does remain, a dear friend of mine to this day. Though he is very much older than I am, I established a friendship with him which never has been interrupted, and never will be, either in time or in eternity. Should it not be thus among all Christians?

Is the Fatherhood of God a reality among the children of God? If it is, let their brotherhood be a reality, and let them show that they are true brothers by their love one to another. May the Lord make it so! The common talk of the universal fatherhood of God is a flat contradiction of the teaching of the Bible. There is certainly in God's Word such a doctrine as adoption. Does God adopt his own children, then? There is certainly a revelation about the new birth. What are the regenerated born into, then? Only into the same nature as they had before? Is there anything fresh given to them which makes them to have the nature of the children of God? I thought, and I

still think, that it was meant that, until then, they were heirs of wrath, children of disobedience, even as others, and children of the wicked one; but by no means children of the family of the Most High. By grace alone could the saints in Rome call God, "Abba, Father."

The next point in their blessedness was that *they had the same Saviour*, for so says the text, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." He who died for Paul died for them. The streams of blood, that flowed for the apostle, flowed for them. For them the bloody sweat, for all of them; for them the death cry, "It is finished," for all of them; and truly, I do think that, being bought with the same price, ought to make us feel that we are all one lump. We were all passed over to Christ by the one transaction of the paying down of his heart's blood to redeem us, and we ought to feel, nay, brothers and sisters, I hope that we do feel that we are all one, and we will endeavour as much as lieth in us to show this in our lives.

And, more than that, *they were going to the same heaven.* Beloved, the home of God should be the great goal to which we are always pressing forward. You see that the men of the world are coming this way in a great crowd, all in a hurry, rushing after their gods; and we, what are we doing? Threading our way, as best we can, pushing our way against the stream, going in an exactly opposite direction to the rest of mankind. Some of you cannot do this; you keep getting carried off your legs, and you are swept along by the torrent; but the man of God must go against the current. He is not to be swept back; but he is always pressing forward, ever seeking to make an advance, contending for every inch, and making up his mind that, come what may, he cannot go back. That is not his way; he must go forward, ever pressing on toward the city that hath foundations. Christians are like a live fish that goes up the stream, always up the stream. If the fish comes down the stream, and you see it floating with its white belly on the top of the water, you know that it is dead; and we can see plenty of these dead fish floating down the stream nowadays. But the live Christian is going straight up the stream, straight up, up, up. Whichever way the tide may be running, whether it is at the ebb or at the flood, he is going straight up the stream; and, God helping him, he will proceed in that way right to the end. So, brethren, as we are going to the same heaven, let us have heaven begun below as we live in love one towards another.

These saints, also, *had the same grace.* I cannot stop to say much about it; but Paul wished for them all that they might have "grace." If you have grace, and I have grace, the grace is the same in us all. It may take a different shape as to the fruit that it produces; but grace is one. Whether it is grace in the babe in Christ, or grace in the strong man in Christ, it is the same grace; and if we all are debtors to grace, and if grace begins, and grace carries on, and grace completes its work in us all, let us, by the bonds of that grace, be knit together in mutual affection the one towards the other.

And then they all *had the same peace.* Oh, what a blessed thing is peace with God, peace with our own conscience, peace with the past,

peace with the present, peace with the future, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding! Hast thou peace, brother, and have I peace? Then let us be as one, for we have the same peace. You must have noticed, in times of peril, how men are driven into each other's arms. If you are on board ship, and the vessel is ready to go down, his lordship will be seen at the pumps working as hard as any sweep who may be on board. Everybody must share alike when they divide the biscuit, and everybody must take his turn at working in the saving of the ship. Well, well, if it be so in time of danger, let it be so in time of peace. Let us have an equally hearty communion and fellowship the one with the other in happy times and under sad circumstances as well.

So have I tried to prepare you to come to this feast. If any of you have any ill-will towards the others, have done with it. If there are any bickerings and jealousies among you, wring the necks of those evil birds, and have done with them; put them to a speedy death. Now, surely, is the time, when we come to the common table of the Lord's one family, to feel that one heart is in us all, and that by him who loved us all, and through him whom we all love, we will love each other. God grant it! I am not aware that there is any special reason now why I should urge you to this unity more than at any other time; but there is always a reason for it. There is never a company of men and women, so large as ours, but what they have little jealousies between them, and you may be quite sure that these are displeasing to God, and should be put away as speedily as possible. So let it be, and thus may we keep the feast in union with Christ, and with one another, for our Saviour's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS I. 1—17.

Verse 1. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,*

Paul has many titles, and he delights to mention them in writing to these Christians at Rome. He puts first his highest title: "A servant of Jesus Christ." He glories in being a servant of the crucified Christ, a servant of him who was despised and rejected of men; so do we. Paul was called out from among men, effectually "called" of God "to be an apostle, separated"—set apart—"unto the gospel of God." He believed that he was separated for that purpose at his birth; but he was specially "separated unto the gospel of God" on the road to Damascus. It is a happy thing when a minister feels that he has nothing to do with anything else but the gospel; that commands all his thought, all his talent, all his time.

2. (*Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,*)

All the gospel is in the Old Testament as well as in the New, for the gospel which Paul was called to preach was promised afore by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

3, 4. *Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:*

He is as much the Son of God as he was the Son of man. The humanity is as true as the divinity, the divinity as true as the humanity.

5. *By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:*

Paul felt that he was sent to preach among all the Gentiles. He had a large bishopric; James might keep to the Jews, but Paul's diocese included every land, he was to preach "among all nations."

6, 7. *Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The gospel is good news; and the man who has to preach it is full of good wishes. He wishes the best possible things to everybody with whom he comes in contact: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."

8. *First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*

Oh, I would it were so with us, that we had faith that could be spoken of throughout the whole world! I am afraid that some have none to speak of; these saints in Rome had such faith that the noise thereof went abroad everywhere, and all people wondered at them.

9. *For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;*

No wonder that they prospered so well when Paul always made mention of them in his prayers. Some churches would prosper better if some of you remembered them more in prayer. Of course, you all pray for the church of which you are members; could you not set aside in your heart a little space for some poor church that is dwindling down to nothing? Could you not pray it up again? Who knows what blessing would come upon pastor and people if you bore them on your hearts?

10. *Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.*

Paul prayed about that matter, and we may pray about our journeys. I like to hear the old-fashioned expression, "Be pleased, O Lord, to grant journeying mercies," for there are such things; and when the servants of God are going about, with a view to spread the gospel, we ought to pray that they may travel in safety.

11. *For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established;*

He wanted to go to Rome because he felt that he would take something with him. He was a poor man, so he could not take any golden or silvern gifts; but he was a chosen man, so he believed that he could impart unto them some spiritual gift. Oh, what a largess does a man of God distribute when his Lord is with him! I do pray to-night that, feeble as I am, and unqualified as I am to bless you, yet even this night all of you who are the people of God may get some spiritual gift. I do not know what you want; but our heavenly Father does. May every one of you get, distinctly from his right hand, some spiritual gift to the end that you may be established, that you may get good root-hold, that you may be firmly fixed on the sure foundation!

12, 13. *That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me. Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.*

Rome was a sink of iniquity; it was the den of the lions, where Nero was, who would speedily devour, like a lion, the minister of Christ. Paul wanted somehow to get into that old city on the seven hills, and to pluck some fruit for God even from the vine that was planted there; but he was hindered.

14, 15. *I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

I do not suppose that Paul guessed that he would be sent there at the government expense, but he was. The Roman Empire had to find a ship for him, and a fit escort for him, too; and he entered the city as an ambassador in bonds. When our hearts are set on a thing, and we pray for it, God may grant us the blessing; but, it may be, in a way that we never looked for. You shall go to Rome, Paul; but you shall go in chains. He had not thought of that plan; still, it was the best way in which he could go. I do not know how he could have preached to the Emperor except as a prisoner; but when he was brought before him to be tried, then he had an opportunity of speaking even to the brutal creature who was called the Emperor of Rome.

16, 17. *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

That is the sum and substance of the gospel: "The just shall live by faith." The law is, "He that doeth these things shall live by them;" but the gospel is, "The just shall live by faith." "Wherefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God." The Lord give to us all that saving faith, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—888, 562, 653.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE HEAVENLY SINGERS AND THEIR SONG.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 13TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 14th, 1889.

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." Revelation v. 8—10.

THIS morning* we had a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ appearing in heaven in his sacrificial character, being adored in that character, looking like a Lamb that had been slain, and being worshipped under that aspect in the very centre of heaven. I tried, as far as ever I could, to insist upon it that we must never hide the atoning sacrifice, that Christ, as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, is always to be brought to the front, to be put foremost in our preaching and in our practice, too. In this verse, we go a step further. This blessed Lamb appears in heaven as the Mediator between God and men. At God's right hand was the book of his eternal purposes. None dared even to look upon it; it was hopeless that any creature should be able to loose the seven seals thereof. But there came forward this glorious Lamb, who had the marks of his slaughter upon him, and he took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. Thus he acted as Mediator, Interpreter, taking the will of God, and translating it to us, letting us know the meaning of that writing of the right hand of God which we could never have deciphered, but which, when Christ looses the seals, is made clear to us.

Jesus Christ, then, is seen as our sacrifice in the capacity of Mediator, and in that capacity he becomes the object of the adoration, first, of

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,095, "The Lamb in Glory."

the Church, then of all the thousands and ten thousands of angels, and then of every creature that God has made. It would be too large a subject to take in all those hallelujahs; and, therefore, in speaking to-night I select only these three verses to set forth the song of the Church, the adoration of the Church of God, rendered to the bleeding Lamb as the Mediator between God and men.

I shall have only two divisions. First, *behold the worshippers;* and, secondly, *hearken to their song.*

I. First, BEHOLD THE WORSHIPPERS; for, remember, that we must be like them if we are to be with them. It is a well-known rule that heaven must be in us before we can be in heaven. We must be heavenly if we hope to sit in the heavenly places. We shall not be taken up to join the glorified choir unless we have learned their song, and can join their sacred harmony. Look, then, at the worshippers. You are not yet perfectly like them; but you will be, by-and-by, if you have already the main points of likeness wrought in you by the grace of God.

The first point about the worshippers is this, *they are all full of life.* I must confess that I should not like to dogmatize upon the meaning of the four living creatures; but still they do seem to me to be an emblem of the Church in its Godward standing, quickened by the life of God. At any rate, they are living creatures; and the elders themselves are living personages. Yet alas, alas, that it should be needful to say so trite a thing; but the dead cannot praise God! "The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day." Yet how many dead people there are in this great assembly to-night! If one, who had sufficient powers of penetration as to be able to detect the actions of the spiritual life of man, were to go round this crowd, "Ah! me," he would say, "take this one away, take that one away; these are dead souls in the midst of the living in Zion." I will not dwell upon this very solemn thought; but I wish the conscience of some here to dwell upon it when the service is over; you are dead people in the midst of life; you joined in the song just now, but there was no living praise in your singing. Prayer was offered by my dear brother Hurditch very fervently; but there was no living prayer in you. Do you know that it is so? If so, then take your right place; and God grant you enough life to know the absence of life, lest he should say of you, "Bury my dead out of my sight," and you should be taken away to the house appointed to the dead, since you cannot be allowed to pollute the gathering of living saints! Those in heaven are all full of life; there is no dead worshipper there, no dull, cold heart that does not respond to the praise by which it is surrounded; they are all full of life.

And further note, that *they are all of one mind.* Whether they are four-and-twenty elders, or four living creatures, they all move simultaneously. With perfect unanimity they fall on their faces, or touch their harps, or uplift their golden vials full of sweet odours. I like unanimity in worship here. You remember the lines—

> "At once they sing, at once they pray;
> They hear of heaven, and learn the way."

We used to sing that hymn when we were children; but is there always real unanimity in our assembly? While one is praising, is not another murmuring? While one is earnest, is not another indifferent? While one is believing, is not another an infidel? O God, grant to our assemblies here below the unanimity that comes of the One Spirit working in us the same result, for so we must be in heaven; and if we are not of one mind here below, we are not like the heavenly beings above! When little bickerings come in, when sectarian differences prevent our joining in the common adoration, it is a great pity. God heal his one Church of all her unhappy divisions, and any one church of any latent differences that there may be, that our unity on earth may be an anticipation of the unanimity of heaven!

Note, next, that as the heavenly worshippers are full of life, and full of unity, so *they are all full of holy reverence.* "When he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb," all reverently fell down before the Lamb. And in the fourteenth verse, after their song was over, and after the angels and the whole creation had taken their turn in the celestial music, we read, "And the four living creatures said, Amen." It was all that they could say; they were overawed with the majestic presence of God and the Lamb. "And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." They did not say anything then; they simply fell down and worshipped. It is a grand thing when, at last, we have broken the backs of words with the weight of our feelings, when expressive silence must come in to prove the praises which we cannot utter. It is glorious to be in this reverent state of mind. We are not always so; but they are so in heaven; they are all ready to fall down before the Lord. Do you not think that we often come into our places of worship with a great deal of carelessness? And while the service is going on, are we not thinking of a thousand things? Or if we are attentive, is there enough lowly worship about us? In heaven, they fall down before the Lamb; brothers, sisters, should not we serve God better if we did more of this falling down to worship the Lamb?

Note, next, that while they are all full of reverence, *they are all in a praising condition:* "Having every one of them harps." They did not pass one harp round, and take turns in playing it; nor was there one who had to sit still because he had forgotten his harp; but they had, every one of them, his harp. I am afraid those words do not describe all God's people here to-night. My dear sister, where is your harp? It is gone to be repaired, is it not? My dear brother, where is your harp? You have left it on the willow-tree, by the waters of Babylon, so you have not one here. I must confess that sometimes I have not a harp; I could preach a solemn sermon, but I could not so well render the praise. Our dear friend Hurditch seemed to have brought his harp with him to-night; I am glad he praised the Lord so many times for so many mercies. We do not always have our harps with us; but the living creatures and the elders had, all of them, the apparatus for the expression of their holy joy, "having every one of them harps." Try to be like the spirits above.

But this is not all; *they are all ready for prayer.* In heaven there is

prayer, we must correct the common mistake about that matter; and there is something to pray for. Although we do not ask the intercession of saints and angels,—that were far from Scriptural,—still, we believe that the saints do pray. Are they not crying, "O Lord, how long?" Why should they not pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, in earth, as it is in heaven"? They would understand that prayer better than we do. We know how God's will is not done on earth, but they know how it is done in heaven; and they could pray, "Thy kingdom come, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." How sweetly could their lips move over such words as those! Well, they, all of them, had "golden vials full of odours." Are we always furnished and prepared for prayer? This ought to be more easy than always to have a harp; but I am afraid that we have not always our golden vials full of odours; I do not know that they are golden vials at all, I am afraid that ours are of the earth, earthy. But in heaven they have golden vials, pure and precious, and they are full of odours. Sometimes, when you look into your prayer-box, my brother, you have to scrape the bottom to find enough perfume to make even a little incense; but to have our vials full of sweet odours, this is the state of mind in which we should be always. God bring us to that! We shall be getting near heaven, when we can always pray, and certainly near heaven when we can always praise.

"Prayer and praise, with sins forgiven,
Bring to earth the bliss of heaven,"

and make us ready to go up and share that bliss.

Now you see something of what these worshippers were. I do but pause a moment to ask whether we are prepared to go there, whether we are like those who are there. Remember that there is but one place for us besides; if we do not enter heaven, to praise with those perfect spirits, we must be driven from the divine presence to suffer with the condemned. You are not willing to go to hell; will you not be in earnest to go to heaven? You recoil at the idea of "Depart, ye cursed!" Oh, why not even now accept "Come, ye blessed," while Jesus repeats his gracious invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? I wish that I were able to press this invitation upon you; but I do put it before you. In the name of Jesus, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, I invite you to trust in him, and find your sins forgiven; and so doing, you shall be prepared to meet the Lamb who sits upon the throne, and there for ever to adore his sacrifice, while you enjoy the blessings that flow from it. May we all meet in heaven! It would be a dreadful thing if we could know the destiny of everybody here, and find, among other things, that some here will never see the gate of pearl except from an awful distance, with a great gulf fixed, of which gulf it is said, "They which would pass from hence to you, cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." May we be on the right side of that gulf! Be on the right side of it to-night, for Jesus' sake!

II. Now, having thus spoken of the worshippers, I want you to HEARKEN TO THEIR SONGS. We must hearken our best in the short

time that we have left. "They sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

It is rather an unusual thing to take a hymn, and treat it *doctrinally;* but, for your instruction, I must take away the poetry for a moment, and just deal with the doctrines of this heavenly hymn.

The first doctrine is, Christ is put in the front, the deity of Christ, as I hold. They sing, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." A strong-winged angel sped his way o'er earth and heaven, and down into the deep places of the universe, crying with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book?" but no answer came, for no creature was worthy. Then came One, of whom the Church cries in its song, "Thou art worthy, thou art worthy." Yes, beloved, he is worthy of all the praise and honour that we can bring to him. He is worthy to be called equal with God, nay, he is himself God, very God of very God; and no man can sing this song, or ever will sing it, unless he believes Christ to be divine, and accepts him as his Lord and God.

Next, the doctrine of this hymn is that the whole Church delights in the mediation of Christ. Notice, it was when he had taken the book that they said, "Thou art worthy to take the book." To have Christ standing between God and man, is the joy of every believing heart. We could never reach up to God; but Christ has come to bridge the distance between us. He places one hand on man and the other upon God; he is the Daysman, who can lay his hand upon both; and the Church greatly rejoices in this. Remember that even the working of providence is not apart from the mediation of Christ. I rejoice in this, that if the thunders be let loose, if plagues and deaths around us fly, the child of God is still under the Mediator's protection, and no harm shall happen to the chosen, for Jesus guards us evermore. All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, and the Church rejoices in his mediatorship.

But now, notice, in the Church's song, what is her reason for believing that Christ is worthy to be a Mediator. She says, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Ah, beloved, when Christ undertook to be her Mediator, this was the extreme point to which suretyship could carry him, to be slain! And he has gone to the extreme point, and he has paid life for life. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," was the sentence pronounced upon Adam. The second Adam has died; he has bowed his head to the sentence, he has vindicated the law of God, he has gone to the extreme length of all that his mediatorship could possibly demand of him, and this makes the redeemed lift up the song higher and higher and higher: "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain." Jesus is never more glorious than in his death; his propitiation is the culmination of his glory, after all, as it was the very utmost depth of his shame. Beloved, we rejoice in our Mediator because he died.

Well then, notice, that they sing of the redemption which his death effected, and they do not sing of the redemption of the world. No, not

at all: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood *out of* every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." I am not going into a doctrinal discussion to-night. I believe in the infinite value of the atoning sacrifice; I believe that, if God had ordained it to be effectual for the salvation of many more, it was quite sufficient for the divine purpose; but those whom Christ redeemed unto God by his blood are not all mankind. All mankind will not sing this song; all mankind will not be made kings and priests unto God; and all mankind are not redeemed in the sense in which this song is lifted up to God. I want to know, not so much about general redemption, of which you may believe what you like, but about particular redemption, personal redemption: "Thou hast redeemed *us*." "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for *it*." "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." My dear hearer, can you join in this song? It is all very well to say, "Oh, yes! we are all sinners; we are all redeemed." Stop, stop; are you a sinner? Do you know it? Sinners are very scarce in London. "Why, there are millions of them!" say you? Yes, yes, yes; nominally, they will say so; but the *bonâ fide* sinner, who knows his guilt, is a scarce article.

> "A sinner is a sacred thing,
> The Holy Ghost hath made him so."

If there is a real sinner in this house to-night, she will be weeping at my Master's feet, washing those blessed feet with her tears. But as for your sham sinners—they are sinners enough, God knows; but they do not really believe that they are sinners. They have never done anything very wrong, nothing very particular, nothing very important, nothing to break their hearts about. Oh! you—why, you cannot even claim to come in among the sinners, you are a sham even there! But as for redemption, that redemption that redeemed everybody will not do you any good, for it redeemed Judas, it redeemed the myriads that are now in hell. A poor redemption that! The redemption that you want is the redemption that would fetch you right out from your fellow-sinners, so that you would be separated unto God, according to that word, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters."

A thing that is redeemed belonged originally to the person who redeems it; and the redeemed of the Lord always were his: "Thine they were," saith Christ, "and thou gavest them me." They always were God's. You cannot go and redeem a thing that does not belong to you. You may buy it, but you cannot redeem it. Now, that which belonged originally to God came under a mortgage through sin. We, having sinned, came under the curse of the Law; and though God still held to it that we were his, yet we were under this embargo, sin had a lien upon us. Christ came, and saw his own, and he knew that they were his own. He asked what there was to pay to redeem them, to take them out of pawn. It was his heart's blood, his life, himself, that was required; he paid the price, and redeemed them;

and we to-night sing, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." He has, by redeeming us, separated us to himself, and made us a peculiar people, bought with blood in a special sense out of all the rest of mankind.

I could tell you a great deal about the universal bearings of Christ's redemption, in which I believe, and in the infinite value of that redemption, in which I believe; but I also say that there was, in the design of God, and in the work of Christ, a peculiar form of redemption, which was only for his own people, even as his intercession is, for he says, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world: but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." Whatever some may think about it, there is a speciality and peculiarity about the redemption of Christ; and this makes the very highest note of the song of heaven, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

So much about the heavenly hymn doctrinally.

Now about it *experimentally:* "Thou hast redeemed us to God." I have said, dear friends, that you cannot sing this song unless you know something of it now. Have you been redeemed? Has the embargo that was on you through sin been taken off you? Do you believe in Jesus Christ? For, every man who believeth in Jesus Christ has the evidence of his eternal redemption. Thou hast been bought back with a countless price if thou believest that Jesus is the Christ, and thou art trusting alone in him. That was their experience: "Thou hast redeemed us." They felt free; they remembered when they wore their fetters, but they saw them all broken by Christ. Have you been set free? Have you had your fetters broken? Ask the question, and then let us pass on.

This redemption is the ground of their distinction: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." I heard one, the other day, say of a certain minister, "Oh! we want another minister, we are tired of this man; he is always talking so much about the blood." In the last great day, God will be tired of the man who made that speech. God never wearies of the precious blood, nor will his people who know where their salvation lies. They do not, even in heaven, say that it is a dreadful word to mention. "Oh, but I do not like the word!" says some delicate gentleman. Your lordship will not be bothered with it, for you will not go to heaven. Do not trouble yourself; you shall not go where they sing about the blood. But, mark you, if you ever do go there, you will hear it over and over and over again: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will ring it out! "Thou, thou, thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." How they will emphasize that pronoun, "*Thou*," and address the praise wholly to Jesus, and sound out that word with the full music of their harps, "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." They are not ashamed of the blood of Jesus up there.

It is this redemption that has made them kings. We cannot realize our kingship to the full here below; though we do in a measure. There is a poor man here, who has but one room to live in; he has no money in his pocket to-night, yet he is a king in the sight of God. There is one here, perhaps, who used to be a drunkard. He could

not overcome the evil anyhow; he signed the pledge, wore the blue ribbon, and so on; but still he went back to the drink. By the grace of God he has got his foot upon it now, for he has a new heart and a right spirit. That man is a king; he is a king over his drunken habits. There is one here who used to have a very fierce temper. It was hard to live with him; but Christ has made him a changed man, and now he is a king, ruling over his temper. It is a grand thing to be made a king over yourself. There are some, who have dominion over millions of others, who have never ruled themselves. Poor creatures! Poor creatures! Thank God, if he has given you the mastery of your own nature; that is a glorious conquest; yet this is only the beginning of what is in this song of heaven.

And then they say, "Thou hast made us priests." Oh, the poor creatures we have nowadays in the world, who cannot go to Christ except by a priest! They must go to a priest to confess their sins, and go to a priest to get absolution. We have priests not only in the Church of Rome, but elsewhere; we are sorry to see this accursed priestcraft coming in everywhere. Why, some of you people would like your minister to do all your religion for you, would you not? You take a sitting, and leave your religion to your minister. Christ has made every one of his people a priest, and every child of God is as much a priest as I am; and I am a priest certainly, a priest unto God to offer the spiritual sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and the ministry of the Word. But here is the peculiar joy of all Christians, that God has made them priests. If they do not use their priesthood here, I am afraid that they will never be able to use their priesthood before the throne of God with their fellow-priests. This is the melody of the heavenly song, "Washed in the precious blood, redeemed by that matchless price, we are now made unto our God kings and priests." Even on earth each saint can sing,—

> "I would not change my blest estate,
> For all that earth calls good or great;
> And while my faith can keep her hold,
> I envy not the sinner's gold."

Thus have I spoken of the song doctrinally, and experimentally; now let me speak of it *expectantly*.

There is something to be expected: "And we shall reign on the earth." When John heard that song, the resurrection-day had not yet come. These are the spirits before the throne, disembodied; they are expecting the day of the resurrection. When that day will come, who can tell? But when it comes, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Upstarting at the midnight cry, they shall quit their beds of dust and silent clay, and the saints that are alive and remain shall join them. I will not go into the details of that time; but then shall come a period of halcyon bliss. "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Then shall be a time of the saints' reigning upon the earth. Their life shall be regal; their delights, their joys, and their honours, shall be equal to those of kings and princes, nay, they shall far exceed them. Do you and I expect to reign upon the earth? It will seem very odd to one who is very poor,

obscure, perhaps ignorant, but who knows his Lord, to find that Christ has made him a priest and a king, and that he shall reign even on the earth with him, and then reign for ever with him in glory; but it would be more singular, it would be perfectly monstrous, if we were to assert of some persons, and of some here present, that they would reign on the earth. The man who lives for himself shall never reign on the earth. "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth;" not the men who, in their selfishness, trample down everybody else with iron heel. You shall not reign on the earth; you have lived here simply to hoard money, or to make a name for yourself, or to indulge your passions, or to revenge yourselves upon your fellow-men. You reign, sir? You? God's prison-house is the place for you, not a throne. But when he has made us meek, and humble, and lowly, and reverent, and pure, then we shall become fit to be promoted to this high calling of being priests and kings for Christ unto God in glory, and even here on earth in the day that is coming.

I wish that everybody here would take to searching himself as to whether he is likely to be of that blessed number. Do you with joy accept Christ as your Mediator? Do you see clearly how worthy he is to be the Mediator? Have you been redeemed from among men? Have you been taken away from old associations? Have you broken loose from habits that held you a slave amongst the Egyptians? Have you come into a new society? Has God brought you into a new heaven and a new earth? Has he given you any measure of reigning power over yourself? Do you live as a priest, serving God continually? If you are obliged to keep on saying, "No, no, no," to all these questions, then what shall I say but "Come to Christ"? May you come to him to-night! May he to-night begin in you that blessed process that shall make you meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXXXVI.

When the chorus was taken up by the whole of the people, accompanied by a blast of trumpets, this must have been a magnificent hymn of praise.

Verse 1. *O give thanks unto the* LORD; *for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

The Psalm begins with the august name, the incommunicable title of the one living and true God, Jah, Jehovah. For this name the Jews had a high respect, which degenerated into superstition, for they would not write it in their Bibles, and put another word instead, in which our translators have imitated them, not to the improvement of the version. Surely, if it is "Jehovah" in the original, we should have it "Jehovah" here. The name is a very wonderful one, "Je-ho-vah." No man knows exactly how it should be pronounced; it is said to consist of a succession of breathings, therefore is it written, "Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord," whose name is a breathing, and in whom dwells the life of all who breathe.

Let us take care that we never trifle with the name of God. I think that the common use of the word "Hallelujah," or, "Praise ye the Lord," is simply profane. Surely, this is not a word to be dragged in the mire; it should be pronounced with solemn awe and sacred joy.

2. *O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

If there be any other god, if there can be imagined to be any, our God is infinitely above them all. The gods of the heathen are idols, but our God made the heavens. If there be any reverence due to magistrates, of whom we read in Psalm lxxxii., "I have said, Ye are gods," yet are they nothing at all compared with Jehovah, "the God of gods."

3. *O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Whatever there be of authority, or lordship, or kingship of any kind, in the world, it is all in subjection to him who is "the Lord of lords." I think I hear the trumpets sounding it out, and all the people joining in chorus, "O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth for ever." It is ever the same strain, the enduring mercy of God, that bore the strain of Israel's sin, and Israel's need, and Israel's wandering.

4. *To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Nobody does wonders that can be compared with Jehovah's wonders. Nobody helps him in the doing of his wonders; he asks no aid from any of his creatures.

5. *To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Every time you lift up your eyes to that one great arch which spans all mankind, praise the name of the great Builder who made that one enormous span, unbuttressed and unpropped. What a work it was! And it was made by mercy as well as by wisdom. If we go into the scientific account of the atmosphere, of the firmament, and of the stellar heavens, we see that the hand of mercy was at the back of wisdom in the making of it all: "for his mercy endureth for ever."

6. *To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

We ought to praise him for the making of every country, especially, I think, we who dwell on these favoured islands, because he has placed our lot in an island.

> "He bade the waters round thee flow;
> Not bars of brass could guard thee so."

We might have been beneath the tyrant's foot, if it had not been for "the silver streak" that gives us liberty. The whole earth, wherever men dwell, will afford some peculiar reason for their praise to Jehovah.

7—9. *To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever: the sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever: the moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Why three verses about one thing? Because we are not wont to dwell upon God's goodness as we should. We are therefore bidden, first, to remember light in general, and then the sun, the moon, the stars, each one in particular; and each time we do so, we may say, "His mercy endureth for ever." We are not left in the daytime without the sun; and, when the day is over, the darkness of the night is cheered either by the moon or by the stars, which show us that, not only day unto day, but night unto night, he thinks upon us, "for his mercy endureth for ever." Praise him, praise him, whether it be high noon or midnight, when the day is renewed or when the curtains of your rest are drawn, still praise him, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

10. *To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

It is not a common mercy of which we have to sing, but a peculiar theme for thanksgiving, he "smote Egypt in their firstborn."

11. *And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Sing of his goodness to his chosen, even though it involved a terrible stroke upon his proud adversary. There are some who cannot praise God's left hand, but we can; not only the right hand that helps his people out, but the left hand that smites the Egyptians. We praise him still with unabated joy in him. What he doeth, must be right; and in his vengeance there is justice, and justice is mercy to mankind.

12. *With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

In all God's acts there is some peculiarity which commands especial attention. "He "brought out Israel," praise him for that. He did it "with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm," therefore again praise him. The ring is precious, but the brilliant in the ring is that to which in this verse you are bidden to look, namely, Jehovah's strong hand, and stretched out arm.

13, 14. *To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

And when you, too, come to the Red Sea on your way to the heavenly Canaan, when your path is blocked, God will divide it for you; and as he gently leads you through the very deeps, he will have you sing, "His mercy endureth for ever." No floods can drown his love, nor divide you from it. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Jehovah will split seas in two to make a passage for his people, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

15. *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

This is the deep bass of the hymn, he "overthrew Pharaoh." "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." We cannot give up that verse; we cannot refuse to sing the song of Moses; we must praise and bless God for all that he did at the Red Sea, even though terrible were his deeds of righteousness, when the chivalry of Egypt sank to the bottom of the sea like a stone.

16. *To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

Here is another point where you can join with Israel. This world is a wilderness to you; but the Lord leads you through it. By his fiery-cloudy pillar, he conducts you all your journey through. By his manna, gently dropping from heaven, he feeds you still; and he will guide you till he brings you over "Jordan's stormy banks"—

"To Canaan's fair and happy land."

17—20. *To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: and slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever: and Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Here you have the repetitions of God. I have sometimes said that I like the tunes which allow us to repeat the line of a hymn; and, certainly, one likes a Psalm which turns over some great mercy of God, and makes us see the various facets of the wonderful jewel. The psalmist does not merely say that Jehovah smote great kings; but these kings were famous in battle, which rendered their greatness or power the more formidable; but whether men be great, or whether they be valorous, or both, they cannot prevent God's mercy to his people. He will push a way for them against the horns

of their adversaries, and they shall be victorious. As if to show the depth of his gratitude, the psalmist gives the names of these kings, and of the countries over which they ruled; and he dwells with emphasis upon these points of the mercy of God to his people, in that he slew famous kings, Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og the king of Bashan.

21, 22. *And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever: even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

He gave them those countries which were beyond the land of promise, because these foes tried to stop their way. He did not limit Palestine; but, on the contrary, he stretched the ordained bounds of it, and enclosed the land of the Amorites and Bashan within the territory he gave to his people.

Now comes a soft sweet verse; I think I hear the harps leading the singing:—

23. *Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:*

Can you not sing this to-night? Some of you, who were very poor, very sad, despairing, abhorred of men, slandered, persecuted, very low, perhaps some here, who once were in the slums of this city, now can sing, "Who remembered us in our low estate." Spiritually, our estate was low enough; it had ebbed out, till we had no comfort nor hope left; but the Lord remembered us. That is a blessed prayer, "Lord, remember me." That prayer has been answered for many here; ay, even before we prayed it. He remembered us in our low estate, "for his mercy endureth for ever." Dear heart, are you in a very low estate to-night? Do you feel as if you were at death's dark door, and at hell's dread brink, by reason of the greatness and blackness of your sin? "His mercy endureth for ever." Catch at that rope. Drowning men clutch at straws; but this is no straw. Do cling to it; it will bear your weight. It has been a means of salvation to myriads before you. Trust God's mercy in Christ, and you are saved, "for his mercy endureth for ever." "Who remembered us"—what next?

24. *And hath redeemed us—*

This song is climbing up; it begins to ascend the heavenly ladder; it has already reached redemption.

24, 25. *From our enemies: for his mercy endureth for ever. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

God is the great Feeder of the world. What a commissariat is that of the universe! One cannot think of the wants of the five millions in London without shuddering lest, some day, there should not be food enough for them; but there always is. I will not trace it to the mere fact that trade and commerce supply us. No, there is an over-ruling power at the back of it all, depend upon it. All the world seems eager to supply our markets, and to make the loaf for the labourer; but it is God who has planned it all. Let us praise him "who giveth food to all flesh." As for spiritual meat, he will give us that; I trust we shall all have a portion of meat in due season to-night. If any shall be hungry at the end of the service, it shall be surely from want of willingness to be fed rather than lack of suitability in the Word of God to sustain the spirit, and bless the soul.

26. *O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—873, 413, 416.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

WHEN CAN WE FIND COMFORTERS?

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 20TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, July 21st, 1889.

"Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"—Nahum iii. 7.

IT is the business of the prophet of God, and of the minister of Christ, to seek comfort for those who are in distress. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." It is a part of our calling to seek, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to bring words of consolation to those who are heavy in heart. We have other work to do; but still this is a part of our commission. God would not have his people's heads hang down, he would have their hearts full of joy and peace in believing; so he sends us, with tender, sympathetic words, to strive to comfort all that mourn.

I can truly say that, while this is our duty, when we succeed in it, it is also our delight. To take the burden from the heavy heart, is a great joy. Whenever I have comforted any mourners, I think that I have had even more comfort than the comforted ones. You cannot impart consolation to others without, at the same time, enjoying it yourself, in some measure at any rate. You put out your hands to open the door into the King's banqueting-house for another; and, lo, your own fingers drip with sweet-smelling myrrh, from the handle of the door! Try to cheer another heart, and you will go the nearest way to cheer your own. So, then, I am glad that I have a text like this; only the gladness is sobered and saddened by the connection in which it stands, and by the almost hopeless character of the question, "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"

I shall have only two divisions to-night. First, *sometimes, our work is very easy;* secondly, *at other times, it becomes so hard as even to be impossible.*

I. First, SOMETIMES OUR WORK IS VERY EASY, especially to those long practised in it. To a young surgeon, a case of a broken bone may be a difficulty; but to one who has long been in his profession, it is a simple matter, and he soon sets the bone.

Now, first, it is a comparatively easy thing to find comforts for *true children of God in the day of their adversity.* Dark days come to the brightest saints. A Christian may, perhaps, enjoy worldly prosperity for a long time; and then the tide may turn, and the man may find all that he had melt away before his eyes. Nothing that he does may succeed; he may be brought very low, even to poverty. In such a case as that, it is not hard to comfort the child of God, for the Lord helps him to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." My brother, your riches consist not in gold and silver; you have in heaven a more enduring portion; and if God, by impoverishing you of these grosser things, enriches you with more refined treasures, you will be a gainer; your loss will turn to your eternal profit. Wherefore, we comfort you readily enough with words like these.

The same is true with *God's people in bereavement.* We come to them, and tell them that it is the Lord who has done it, and ask, "Shall he not do what seemeth him good?" In many cases, we are able to tell them that they have not lost their relative or friend. Their beloved ones have only crossed the river a little before them, and they will soon pass over the same stream, and be for ever joined where they shall part no more. Though it be some beloved child, or other dear relative, or even the partner of one's bosom, or a much-beloved friend, yet to find consolation for mourners of that kind, is not the hardest work that the pastor has to do. Refrain thine eyes from weeping, especially keep back thy heart from tears. They shall come again from the land of their captivity. They die but to live for ever, and thou shalt meet them before long.

And, dear friends, it is not so very difficult to find comfort for *children of God who are under the trial of persecution.* There are still many of God's people who endure the trial of cruel mockings, and something worse than that. Some of you have to suffer in many ways for Christ's sake. "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Let not this trouble you; Christ has provided abundant consolation for all who suffer with him, for they shall reign with him, for ever and ever. They shall be—

> "Brightest of the saints in light,
> 'Midst the bright ones doubly bright."

They shall receive larger palms and brighter crowns than others who have suffered less for his dear name's sake. We do not say about these dear Christians, "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" for we know where to point them to most effectual consolation.

Sometimes, we have to deal with *fainting Christians,* yet when we meet with them we do not find their case one of superlative difficulty. Every now and then, I suppose, almost all of us get into a condition in which our joy and comfort have to be looked for, but can scarcely be found. Partly through ill-health, partly from the strain of high excitement, which is followed by a reaction, we get to be like Elias, when he said, "Now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." There are times when the pulse scarcely beats,

and the blood begins to cool, and the heart is faint. Beloved, whenever we meet with you in that condition, we tell you that we have been in that state ourselves; nay, we remind you that our Lord himself was in an agony, and was greatly depressed in spirit. We have to assure you that the condition of your frames and feelings does not affect your safety in Christ. We have to remind you that, though you are changed, God is not changed. The promise, the old covenant, stands just as fast when you are down in distress as when you are on the high places of exultation. You are saved by faith, not by feeling; and when feeling ebbs out to the very last degree, still hold on to Jesus; sink or swim, still trust in him. When you see no trace of his actual presence with you, rely upon him all the same, and be of good cheer. This is not hard to say; and when the Spirit of God is with us, we find no lack of consolation for fainting saints.

Nor do we find ourselves much embarrassed by cases of *disappointed workers*. We hear them say, "Surely we have laboured in vain, and spent our strength for nought. Who hath believed our report? To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" But we tell them of many of God's saints who laboured long without seeing any immediate result, and yet they were accepted of God. Jeremiah, the plaintive, weeping prophet, saw the people reject everything that he said; yet he was not rejected, but accepted of God; and amongst honourable men, there is none more excellent than the prophet Jeremy. Beloved, you may be sent to warn a people who never will be saved, and yet you will be blessed. When Isaiah saw the seraphim, and in answer to God's call, "Whom shall I send?" said, "Here am I; send me," you notice what his commission was. He was sent, not to bring the people to God, but to go and say to them, "Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes." He obeyed his commission as it was given to him, and his Lord rewarded him. That may be your case. Besides, you are no judge of your own success. I think that it has been noticed by ministers very often, so often as to be like a Baconian induction, that, when we think that we preach worst, God usually blesses the people most, and that, when we appear to have had the least power, God displays his ability more clearly than at other times. Wherefore, when you go home weeping, while you have only sown in tears, you shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. But you are no judge of what you do yourself, and you cannot tell what the results of your work may be. If you see them not, the angels may have seen them; and while you are weeping, they are rejoicing. At any rate, you are not responsible for the harvest; you are responsible for ploughing and sowing. If you have done your work well, in the fear of God, what comes of it rests with God, and not with you.

Sometimes, beloved friends, we have the task of comforting *dying believers*, and that is no very difficult thing. There is one whom I could mention to you who, not long ago, spent all that he had in taking a new business, which he needed for his growing family, and he hoped to prosper in it. He had scarcely been in the house many weeks before his daughter was brought home to him, and when taken upstairs,

she was found to be raving with madness. She was watched over carefully; but, to the breaking of his heart, she had to be put away. Not long after, another, dear to his heart, was suddenly taken away. By-and-by, he himself fell ill, and, at last, going to a physician, he was told that his case was a very serious one; he had better see a specialist. He saw the specialist, who told him that he had an internal cancer, that he might be operated upon, but that in all probability he would die under the operation, and he would advise him to live as long as he could. That happened not long ago. If I were to introduce him to you, what kind of a man would you expect him to be, with his bereavements, and with his prospect of soon dying probably a very painful death? You would suppose that he would look very dull, haggard, and so forth. There is not a more cheerful person beneath the cope of heaven; and when he crawled up to London, the other day, to do some business, and some persons wondered that he did it, he said, "While I can, I will do my best in the place where God has put me. When I can get out no more, I will sit still and praise God; and when the time comes, I will die with my face towards the New Jerusalem." That is how Christians live, and that is how Christians die. We do not find, when we have to deal with a believer in Christ, that it is at all a difficult thing to cheer the heart either in the near or the distant prospect of death.

Nor, dear friends, do we find ourselves much troubled in seeking to comfort *repenting backsliders.* It is grievous that any should backslide; it is horrible that the Church of God should have her name disgraced, that the Christ of God should have his religion bespattered by the iniquities of professing Christians; but when the Lord touches the wandering heart, and it breaks under a sense of guilt, and the man turns back to his God, we find it easy to say, "The Lord delighteth in mercy. Return, ye backsliding children. God is willing to receive you, he is waiting to bless you." The Word of God is full of consolation to backsliders who are seeking his face. Guilty as you are, the Lord says, "Return unto me, for I am married unto you." He might well divorce you; but the Lord, the God of Jacob, says that he hates putting away. He will not cast off the people of his choice; he is glad to receive them back after all their uncleanness and filthiness. Yes, there is much comfort for returning backsliders; and if there are any such here to-night, I would put out my hand, and say, "Come back, my brother; come and welcome to the Saviour."

And certainly there is no difficulty in trying to comfort *seeking sinners.* If any man is seeking the Saviour, the Saviour is seeking him.

> "Thy seeking his face
> Is all of his grace."

He has begun with you, or else you would not have begun with him; and now, if you will simply trust him, only trust him, you shall have immediate peace. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." That is a glorious passage. "He that believeth on him is not condemned," is another blessed phase of the same comforting truth. If thou hast received Christ, to thee he gives the power to become one of the sons of God, "even to them that believe on his name."

There is a whole hive full of real honey for a soul that comes to Christ. You may even dip your hand in it, if you will, and eat as much sweetness as you please, for you will never exhaust it.

Thus I have explained how, sometimes, in seeking comforters, our work is easy.

II. But, dear friends, AT OTHER TIMES IT BECOMES SO HARD AS TO BE IMPOSSIBLE. Nahum says, concerning Nineveh, "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"

Assyria, of which Nineveh was the capital, was *an empire which existed entirely for itself.* No Assyrian monarch ever thought of what would be for the good of the nations that he conquered. I should think that, if anybody ever mentioned such a thing, he would have laughed at him, or he would have put out his eyes, or cut off his head. There was no idea that anybody else had any rights at all except the king of Assyria, for even his subjects were simply his puppets, destroyed by his will and pleasure; and Assyria was thus the incarnation of pure, or rather of impure, selfishness. Well, when a selfish man goes down as Nineveh did, who comforts him? He never did anybody any good, and he may say if he likes, "I cared for nobody, and nobody cares for me." It is very hard, indeed, to say anything by way of comfort to a man who is broken down, and who never cared for other people. Do not get into that state of mind, I pray you, dear friends. I believe that selfishness is the front-door key of despair; for it never did any good to anybody; so, when it gets into trouble, nobody brings it comfort, and everybody says, "Who will bemoan thee? Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?"

The Assyrians also *dealt very cruelly with others.* On the great stones that Mr. Layard brought home, there are awful pictures of what was being done with the captives, heaps of heads cut off from men who had been taken in war, eyes gouged out, and all sorts of dreadful things with which I will not horrify you; and, consequently, when that cruel power was put down, who would wish to seek comfort for it? Oh, that we may be prevented from ever being cruel to others! If we are cruel to others, when our turn comes, there will be no comfort for us. These people plundered every nation wherever they went; they took away everything that they could, and left them penniless, devoured the fruits of the ground, and cared nothing what desolation they left behind. But when the time came for them to be robbed, and their capital to be despoiled, nobody thought of comforting them. They were left to reap what they had sown.

Besides that, *they were famous for their pride,* and that pride rose up into *blasphemy.* Remember how the Assyrian messenger, Rab-shakeh, defied Jehovah. He said "Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?" So, when their corpses were all piled up in the streets, no nation wept for them, nobody cared for them. Oh, dear friends, do conduct your business in such a way that you do not crush the poor! Do manage everything in such a way that you rob nobody. Be straight; be just; be kind. "Live and let live," or else, if your turn to fall should come, one of these days,

nobody will bemoan you, or be sorry for you. If you lift up your hand in proud blasphemy against God, and he brings you down to the dust, you will be quoted as an instance of how the justice of God overtakes the proud. The Lord keep us from all this! I cannot help mentioning it, because it is in the chapter, and has to do with the text. It is much better that you and I should go humbly on in laborious poverty, and find our way to heaven with good repute, than that we should become even kings of the earth, and lords of all her wealth, and after all should be found to have lived only for self, and to have cared for none besides, for then our downfall will be terrible in the day of the Lord's vengeance.

But, besides this, there are other people whom we cannot comfort. There is a man in a good deal of trouble about his soul, so he says. He comes to me, and, on talking with him, and probing him a bit, I find that he is *living in the commission of a known sin.* He says that he cannot believe; he cannot pray; he cannot get comfort. Of course, he cannot while he indulges any known sin. Whence shall we find comforters for thee? God will not forgive you while you continue in that sin. Christ will not cleanse you from the guilt of it, while you continue in the practice of it. You must part with sin, or we cannot comfort you; we will not try to do so.

And, next, there are some who do not get any comfort, though they have left off sin, because *they have never made restitution.* If you have robbed or wronged anybody, when you come to Christ, do what Zaccheus did, who said that, if he had taken anything from any man by false accusation, he would restore him fourfold. There was a minister in this city, a dear friend of mine, who preached a sermon upon the necessity of restitution when wrong had been done; and some of his friends told him that, if he preached in that way, he would drive the people away. But, during the week, he met in the street a man of about his own age, who said to him, "Were you not in Messrs. So-and-so's warehouse once?" "Yes, I was." "Did you not lose a watch while you were there?" "Yes, I did." "Well, I was there at the same time. Do you recollect me?" "What is your name? Oh, yes, I recollect your name!" "I stole your watch. I came to hear you last Sunday night, and I cannot rest till I have given you ten pounds to make restitution for that watch." "No," said my friend, "I do not want money." "But I must make restitution," said the other. At last, my friend explained that the watch was not worth ten pounds, though it might have been worth four; so the man gave him the four pounds, and he came back to his critics, and said, "I have made four pounds profit by that sermon anyhow, whatever you may have thought of it. I had forgotten all about my lost watch; but my sermon has brought me back the money for it." The man who thus made restitution is now, I believe, an honourable Christian man. I do not see how he could have been so with that watch on his conscience; and I do not believe that, do what we may, we can give comfort to people who have wronged others till, to their very utmost, they have made restitution. Whence shall I comfort thee, if thou repentest not of thy robbery, but keepest the proceeds of it?

Again, there is another sort of people whom we cannot comfort,

people who seem very concerned to get pardon, but when you come to understand them, you discover that *they are living in enmity against somebody*, a brother, a mother-in-law, a cousin, or a friend, whom they will not forgive. They keep on harbouring hatred in their minds. I am grieved to say that it is not altogether an unusual thing to find fathers who will not forgive a daughter, or a son. They did not happen to marry the person you would have liked to choose for them; and, of course, you have a perfect right, have you not, to make the selection for them? You thought you had a right to pick for yourself, but you will not give that right to your children; so you have an enmity against them on that account; and then you go whining to God to forgive you, and yet you will not forgive your daughter. Here you are on your knees, crying, "Lord have mercy upon me," yet you will not have mercy upon that friend who did once wrong you, and whom you ought to have forgiven long ago. Now, remember, that it is of no use for you to pray, or do anything else, if you will not from your heart forgive those who have offended you; for neither will God, even for Christ's sake, forgive you. There must be a clean sweep of everything like enmity out of your heart, or else you cannot be at peace with God. Enmity cannot lie down with love; darkness cannot weld with light. You cannot enter into the peace of God till you are willing to forgive others. There are many people who get hung up on that nail; I wish they could get released from it, by God's grace.

We meet with some also who profess to be very anxious to be saved; perhaps I have some such here to-night, and yet *they do not pray*. You rise in the morning, and you go to bed at night, without a prayer; and all day long God is not in all your thoughts. Do you expect, then, to be saved by accident? Do you really reckon that, one of these days, as you walk down the street, salvation will drop on you, whether you will or not? Beloved, if you desire this great boon of God, ask for it: "He that asketh, receiveth." If you want to find this treasure, look for it: "He that seeketh, findeth." If you would get heaven's door opened, I pray you use the knocker: "To him that knocketh, it shall be opened." No prayer, no Bible-reading, no going to hear the Word with the earnest intent to find out what the way of salvation is, why, dear me, how can you escape if you neglect so great salvation? You are evidently living in constant neglect. Nobody ever prospers in business who does not pay attention to it; and no man can expect to enter into peace with God when he goes on in a sort of slipshod way, going sometimes to a place of worship, occasionally feeling a little earnest, but never seeking the Lord with his whole heart. Men, you will have to be aroused out of this fatal lethargy; may the Spirit of God awaken you this very night! Resolve that you will not let the angel go unless he bless you. May the great Master bring you to that state of mind at once!

There are others, and these are the people we have so often to deal with, who feel their sin, and who really wish to be saved, and they do a great deal in the hope of being saved; but there is one thing they will not do, *they will not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. They try to be saved by their prayers, as if there was any promise that God would save us for our praying. They try Bible-reading, for in the

Scriptures they think they have eternal life; but they forget that eternal life is not in the Bible except as the Bible testifies of Christ, and points to Christ. They have been christened, they have been confirmed, they are members of churches, and so on, and there they rest; no, they do not "rest." They feel that there is still something wanted, which they have not yet obtained. That which is wanted, my friend, is that thou shouldst come, and—

"Cast thy deadly doing down,
Down at Jesu's feet,"

and trust in what he has done, and then art thou saved. That is the whole philosophy of salvation. There are two ways of salvation; the one is self-salvation, and it is a dream, an empty thing, an awful disappointment. The other is Christ's salvation; come, and put yourself wholly into his hand, and say, "Save me, Lord. By profession, thou art a Saviour; execute thy holy craft upon me, and save me. Save me from my sin, the guilt of it. Save me from sinning, the practice of it. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, purify me from the love of evil, and make me clean. Thou canst do it, and thou alone canst do it." Now, if you trust the Saviour, you are saved. I will repeat again that declaration of Christ, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." But if thou wilt not believe, I know of nothing whereby I can comfort thee. If thou wilt not have Christ, there remains nothing but condemnation for you; there can be no other sacrifice for sin. Thou hast insulted God by rejecting his Son, and thou must go before thy God unsaved and unforgiven. Beware thou of such a doom as that.

Sometimes we have to feel what an awful thing it would be if we had to deal with a soul that was eternally lost. Then, indeed, we might say, in the language of our text, each word dripping with tears of blood, "Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" Will any of my hearers be lost? Will any here die without Christ? Will any here refuse the great salvation to the last? If so, what comfort could I administer to such? I shall have, on the contrary, to put it thus, "You knew the way of salvation, but you chose the other road, ay, chose it deliberately; and if you have come into the place of wrath and death, who shall bemoan you? Who shall comfort you?" You made your choice, and you must have your choice for ever. All that you will suffer in the next world will be the fruit of your own sin. Hell is sin fully ripe. Drunkenness, lechery, dishonesty, lying, enmity, when these come to seed, they make hell. They pain men enough in this world; and if the softening influences of Christianity were taken away, and men were just left in the world together to act according to their own passions and their own lusts, that would be all the hell they would need. You will have to feel, in every pang that you endure for ever, "This is nothing but my old sin." Whenever you are overwhelmed with woe in the next world, and look your own woe in the face, you will say to yourself, "Why, that is what I used to call 'pleasure', and it has come to me here in this shape; and I was told that I should say that; I was warned, and yet I perished despite the warning." If you are lost, my hearers, you will have

refused the great sacrifice of which you know, for to the best of my power, in the simplest words that I could find, I have set forth Christ among you evidently crucified, and I have said, "There is your only hope of salvation. Look to Jesus, and live." If you will not have God's gift, if you put far from you the Christ who alone hath life eternal, you need not wonder when he leaves you to yourselves.

Besides, in that day, some of you especially will have to remember how you *stifled conscience.* You have gone into some worldly pleasure on purpose to silence the voice of conscience. Sometimes, sitting in this house, you have been almost brought to decision. You have said, "Please God I get home, I will seek my chamber, and fall upon my knees before him in prayer." How often have you been brought very near the kingdom; and how terrible is it to be so near, and then deliberately to turn back! Your blood will be upon your own heads; and, truly, if it be so, whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Some of you *would not be persuaded.* You have had a mother's tearful admonition; teachers have pleaded with and for you in the most earnest way; you have had judgments, too, from God, sicknesses that have shaken every bone of your body. You have been brought to feel that there is a God, and that he would deal with you. Remember that solemn prophecy, "He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." I sometimes start in my sleep at the thought of one of my hearers being in hell. Ah, sirs, if you do not care about your own souls, we at least will care about them for you. How can I be clear of the blood of you all, so many of you, and so often addressed? Do you wonder that I am often distressed beyond measure at my own position? It were better for me to have broken stones on the road than to have preached to you, if I have been unfaithful to your souls; for then, in the next world, you will curse me, and it shall be my hell to bear the reproaches that you shall justly fling at me. But I beseech you, by the living God, and as you believe yourselves to be immortal beings, accept to-night his way of salvation, so simple and so easy. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth and is baptized"—which is the Christian method, the Biblical method of confessing your faith—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

I leave you all in God's hands. Pray, dear Christian people, that every one who has heard me to-night may be saved, and that this rainy night may be indeed memorable as the night in which many a sinner cried,—

> "I do believe, I will believe,
> That Jesus died for me;
> That on the cross he shed his blood,
> From sin to set me free."

Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

NAHUM II. 11—13, AND III.

This is a prophecy of the destruction of Nineveh. Remember that Assyria had been one of the great powers that swayed the world, a cruel, tyrannical empire; and God at last determined to destroy Nineveh, which was its seat of government. In a high poetical strain, the prophet cries out,—

Chapter ii. Verse 11. *Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding-place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?*

You will remember how Mr. Layard took out of the ruins at Nineveh those immense lions that now stand in the British Museum. They were the very type of this great empire, that boasted itself in its lion-like strength and ferocity. So the prophet cries, "Where is the lair of the lion?"

12. *The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.*

They were always destroying, and plundering, and carrying home the spoil, so that everybody was fattened with the rapine of the nations.

13. *Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts,*

And whenever that is the case, a man does not need any other adversary. If God be against you, O my dear hearer, what will become of you? Though you should have all the power of the world, and possess robust health, abundant riches, and keen wit, what can you do against God? "I am against thee, saith Jehovah of hosts." He throws down the gauntlet to Nineveh.

13. *And I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.*

It is time that they were stopped. You remember in what foul-mouthed language Rab-shakeh addressed king Hezekiah; and God now declares that there shall be no more such letters as his. God may allow evil to lord it over his people for a while; but he puts a hook in the mouth of the leviathan by-and-by. He that restraineth the sea and the waves thereof, Jehovah is his name, and he restraineth the wickedness of men.

Chapter iii. Verse 1. *Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;*

Assyria became a great empire through violence, falsehood, and robbery. The soldiery had no respect for justice; they trod out the last spark of liberty, and crushed all nations under their feet.

2, 3. *The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the pransing horses, and of the jumping chariots. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses:*

When the Medo-Babylonian army came against the great city, it inflicted a terrible slaughter, killing the inhabitants without mercy, making a very holocaust of human bodies; but, inasmuch as it was a den of criminals, this horrible execution was well deserved. Yet is the story dreadful.

4, 5. *Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts;*

These people had been steeped in sin of the worst kind, they had led other nations into it; and had practised the witchcrafts which God abhors.

Therefore again Jehovah says, "I am against thee." When God is in arms against a triumphant nation, he soon makes an end of it.

5, 6. *And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock.*

See what God can do. They were the proudest of the proud, and now he makes them the scorn of the scorner, and sets them as a gazingstock. May God never deal in that way with any proud man here! He can easily do it; when we set ourselves up to be little gods, he can soon make us utterly mean and contemptible, and bring us down to nothing at all. It is his way to deal thus with the proud.

7. *And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?*

If you could go to-day, and see the vast heaps of Kouyunjik, and of the great monuments of that mighty city all destroyed and crumbling into powder, you would know something of what God can do. It does not look likely to you that London can ever become a heap of ruins; and yet it may be, for its sins reek up to heaven as the sins of Nineveh did. The Lord can smite this city as he smote that.

8. *Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?*

The prophet quotes the destruction of the city called No-Amon, probably Thebes, as an instance of what God can do.

9. *Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite;*

There seemed to be no measure to her strength. If she wanted assistance from other nations, she had only to call them in, and the mercenary tribes were ready to defend her.

9, 10. *Put and Lubim were thy helpers. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.*

So one city is a warning to another. No in Egypt is a warning to Nineveh in Assyria, and both of these a warning to our city, and a warning to every man who is proud, and haughty, and domineering, and oppressive to the poor, great in his own wisdom, and careless for the comfort of others.

11. *Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.*

Nineveh never dreamed of doing that; she said, "I am a queen, I shall see no sorrow; I am the greatest of all cities."

12. *All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.*

As figs do when they are ripe. These castles, towers, fortresses, built to stand the siege, would be no sooner attacked than they would fall into the hand of the enemy.

13. *Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women:*

You see, on those great Assyrian stones, the strong men that are sculptured there, with their enormous muscles, telling of gigantic force. When God came to deal with them, they became weak and cowardly.

13, 14. *The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars. Draw thee waters for the siege,*

The prophet challenges them to defend themselves.

14. *Fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the morter, make strong the brickkiln.*

That was, to mend the walls whenever they were broken. They did this with great industry. "Do it," says God, "yet you shall not be able to stand."

15—17. *There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker worm: make thyself many as the canker worm, make thyself many as the locusts. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker worm spoileth, and fleeth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.*

What marvellous poetry is this! How terrible! Their soldiers, their rulers, their captains, were as many as the locusts and the grasshoppers; but when they were wanted, all these hosts would flee away. What cannot God do when he comes out to fight with men? "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name." He brings confusion to his enemies. Oh, fight not against him! Beloved, let us be at peace with him, the strong and mighty God. Let us confess our faults to him, acquaint ourselves with him, and be at peace.

18. *Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria:*

They who should have taken care of the people, the chief governors, neglected them; they who should have defended the people were out of the way when they were wanted: "Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria."

18. *Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.*

Let not the same be said of London. Are there any who can say, "No man careth for my soul"? Let them not be without a helper.

> "Oh, come, let us go and find them!
> In the paths of death they roam;
> At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say,
> 'I have brought some lost one home.'"

Brothers and sisters, rouse yourselves; be shepherds to the people of this modern Nineveh, and seek to gather the scattered flock of Christ.

19. *There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous:*

Thank God, we have not come to that point yet, there is healing for the bruised sinner! Though the wounds of our people are grievous, there is a balm for them; we know where it is, and what it is; let us not be slow to tell them about it.

19. *All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee:*

I think that is the old Norman-French word, "*bruit*," signifying noise or tumult, that has been left in our Bible.

19. *For upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?*

Nineveh had been so wicked, and had done so much evil, that when men heard that it was destroyed, they would even clap their hands for very joy that such an evil-doer was out of the way.

I know not to what purpose I was moved to read this passage; but it is specially meant for some one, to whom may God apply it by his Spirit!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—497, 515, 591.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

OBEDIENCE REWARDED.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, AUGUST 27TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 1st, 1889.

"And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me."—Matthew xxviii. 8—10.

THESE holy women, these consecrated Maries, shall be our instructors to-night. They were highly-favoured to be the first witnesses for our risen Lord. Do you wonder why he chose them? Was it because their hearts were tender, and they were very sad at his death, more sad than the men? And is it not his wont to come first to those who need him most, and to pour in oil and wine where the wound gapes widest? It may be so. Was it because they had been the more faithful of the two; and while some men had denied him, and all had forsaken him, the women were last at Golgotha, as they were now first at the sepulchre? Did their Lord reward them by dealing with them as they had dealt with him? That is but his wont. "If ye will walk contrary unto me, then will I also walk contrary unto you," said the Lord to Israel; and he also said, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." These holy women did seek their Lord early on the morning of his resurrection, and they found him to a certainty before all others. Was this because Jesus had found the women more spiritual than the apostles? Certainly, I think that was the case. They had attained the very climax of love, washing his feet with their tears. They had reached the very centre of discipleship; one of them had chosen the good part, and sat at his feet. Sometimes, where there is less power of understanding, Jesus does give keener powers of perception; and though Mary Magdalene and the other Mary would never have become Pauls, yet they were of quick eye, like John, and were, therefore, the fittest to see the Saviour in the dawning of the morning, and they were permitted to have the first glimpse of him.

At any rate, be it how it may, they were the first to see their risen

Lord, and we will try to learn something from them to-night. It should be an encouragement to those members of the Church of Christ who are neither pastors nor teachers that, if they live very near to God, they may yet teach pastors and teachers. Get clear views of your Lord, as did these holy women, who had no office in the Church, and yet taught the officers, for they were sent to bear to the apostles the tidings that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Not first to them who were the heads of the Church, as it were, but first of all to lowly women, did the Lord appear; and the apostles themselves had to go to school to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to learn that great truth, "The Lord is risen indeed." We will go to school with the apostles to-night; and may the Lord grant that, while we learn from these holy women, he who taught them may come and teach us! May he who met them meet with us in this house of prayer to-night!

First, I ask you to look at these women *in the way of obedience active.* They ran to bring the disciples word. Secondly, look at them *in the way of obedience rewarded;* for, as they went to tell his disciples, Jesus met them. And then, thirdly, we will go back to the point where we started, and see these women *in the way of obedience refreshed;* for, after they had seen the Lord, they persevered in their heavenly errand, and still went to tell his disciples that he would go before them into Galilee, and that there they should see him.

I. First, then, notice these women IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE ACTIVE.

They had gone to the sepulchre to see and also to embalm the body of Christ; but while they were there, an angel appeared to them, and committed to them this charge, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;" and they went upon their errand with most commendable alacrity. Now, you and I, dear friends, must try to copy them. What thou hast seen, thou must tell; what thou hast been taught, thou must teach. To thee, believer, has been committed the oracle of God. See that thou keep it. Hold it fast, and hold it forth. Thou hast not this light for thyself alone; but that it may shine before men. See thou to this. Peradventure, these women may help thee in so doing.

Observe first, then, that they went about their errand *not doubting the revelation.* The angel said to them, "Tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee." They did not stop to ask any question, to make any demur, to utter any critical doubts; but they believed. Now, it is to be thus with you; you cannot be a messenger from God unless you believe. If you do not believe the gospel, do not pretend to preach it. Go home, my dear friends, and bury your head in your doubts, and twist your brains about, and tie them up into knots, and amuse yourself as you like; but do not pretend to go and tell that of which you are not yourself sure. Otherwise, you will lack the accent of confidence, and consequently you will lack the power of persuasion. He that is not firm himself cannot move others. If there be no fulcrum for your lever, where is your power? "I believed; therefore have I spoken," said the psalmist, and he did well; for there must first be the believing, and then the speaking. Leave thou the message to another if thou art

not sure of it; let another who *is* sure of it, tell it till thou, too, art sure of it; then mayest thou also run with good tidings from thy Lord. These godly women leaped at once into the full conviction that Christ was risen, and therefore they hastened to tell the tidings to the disciples.

And, again, they obeyed, *not discussing their authority* to go and proclaim this news. What avails it if I believe the truth, and yet am not empowered to teach it? According to some, I can only be authorized by some special ceremonial; I must undergo certain processes before I may be permitted to preach; but the angel said to these women, "Go and tell," and they went to tell. They did not hesitate, they asked no question about apostolical succession, or episcopal ordination, or anything of the kind. They were told to go, and they went. Hast thou heard Jesus speak to thee? Dost thou know his love? Hast thou an inward persuasion that thou hast to tell thy friends what great things he has done for thee? Then, go in this thy might. If thou hast any hesitancy about thy right to labour for thy Lord, if thou doubtest that passage, "Let him that heareth say, Come," then go not; for, if thou dost not believe that thou hast a right to go, thy going will be with an inward weakness, and thou wilt be taken up rather with thyself than with thy message, and with the heart of him to whom thou carriest it. I love to hear men say that they *must* do this and that, for only that which is done under the imperious necessity of a divine impulse will ever be followed by any great result. If thou canst live without preaching the gospel, do live without preaching it; for if God has sent thee, thou wilt say with Paul, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" And thou, my sister, if thou art sent to do any work for God, and hast a yearning to win souls, thou hast a fire in thy bones which cannot be restrained; thou couldst no more be stayed from speaking of Jesus than the sun can be stayed from shining in mid heaven. May God grant that we may have among us many who, in going forth to work for Christ, are sure about what they have to tell; and sure about their authority to tell it!

This being so with these women, we notice, next, that they went on their errand *not declining on account of weakness.* They might have said, "Oh, we are not the people to go to the apostles!" Mary Magdalene might have said, "You know what I used to be; would you have me go and talk to John, and James, and Peter?" Indeed, the holy women might at once have refused the commission, and said, "We do not feel ourselves qualified; we have a natural timidity and modesty which put it out of the question that we should go on such a service as this." But not a word of that kind did they utter; and dear brethren and sisters, while souls are dying, dare we hesitate on account of weakness? Do you not think that it is the man who is most conscious of weakness who is usually the chosen man for the Lord's service? Did not Moses wish to decline the office of leader of Israel because he was slow of speech? Did not Isaiah cry, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips"? And if you are conscious of weakness as great as that of these godly women, or greater even than theirs, yet still I say that the pressure of human

necessity, and the pressure of the divine message, should be so heavy upon you that you should say, "I will go even as did the lepers of old, when they had found out the plenty that there was in the camp of the Syrians, and knew of the sore famine in Samaria." They could not sit still; but, all over leprosy as they were, they must go to the king's household, and tell them that there was bread enough and to spare, and that the people need not die of hunger. Oh, yes, we must go; even we must go! The time may have been when only the choice and pick of the Church were needed for holy service, but these times are not now. When sin abounds, when error rages, when the faithful are but few, then every man, and every woman, and even every babe in grace, must speak, or lisp, or prattle the good news that Christ is risen from the dead, and is able to save and bless.

Then, dear friends, as these women were not detained from this work by a sense of weakness, so they obeyed, *not held back by curiosity*. They might have stayed to look at the sepulchre. They were invited to come and see the place where the Lord lay; and, like the two disciples, they might have gone in, and observed how the napkin was laid by itself, and the linen cloths were folded. I think that, if you and I had had the opportunity of looking into that wonderful sepulchre where the Lord lay, we should have liked to linger there all through that day, to worship and adore. But no curiosity, nay, no devotion, kept them at the sepulchre when they once had the command to go and tell the disciples that Christ was risen from the dead. Now, these days are full of temptation. We have a thousand fields for curiosity to wander in. How shall we settle this debate? How shall we answer that criticism? Every day brings to light some fresh objection, some new theory. Shall we stop till we have answered every objection, till we have destroyed every theory? No, my brethren, we cannot afford to stop. Let others debate; we must declare. Let others discuss; we must proclaim that Jesus Christ has come into the world to save sinners. Sinners, look you to him; and, looking, you shall live. We must make this the burden of our daily conversation, the constant theme of our talk,—"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the very chief of them." We must keep to this. As these women were not turned aside to make any curious observation, so must not we be; but we must keep to our one work of telling his disciples where to look for him, and bidding them follow him.

And, dear friends, again, I want you to notice that they were *not hampered by their emotions*. It is a very blessed thing sometimes to have an opportunity of indulging your emotions. These women were subject to the influences of two opposite currents, "fear and great joy." Fear put wings to their heels; and great joy seemed to lend them extra speed. By the two together they ran to bring the disciples word. It may be very pleasant to get alone, and spend much time in close communion with Christ; the more of it the better. It may be well to practise introspection until you see the evil of your heart, and are filled with fear. It may be well to look up, and see the beauties of your Lord, and the glories of his Advent, till you are filled with great joy. But neither of these must be allowed to keep you away from actual service, and the continual telling out of the gospel of

Christ. I have known it to be the case. I remember a good man, who was a great authority on the Book of the Revelation. I am sorry to say that, great as he was on the Revelation, his influence was very bad on his children at home. He knew all about the seven trumpets, but he did not know much about the seven boys and girls he had at home; so they grew up very badly. Never break the balance of holy emotions and sacred duties; let us have our fear and our great joy; but, at the same time, we must not sit down because we have great joy, but we must run on the Lord's errand, joy and all. Let us run as fast as we can, whether we fear or whether we rejoice. Learn that lesson from these godly women. You feel very dull; go to your Bible-class. You feel as if you had done no good for a long time; go on in the Lord's work. But God has greatly blessed you, and you are getting rather old, and you want rest; go on with your work, run to bring the disciples word whether you feel fear or joy. Stand you over your work, be *in-stant*—standing over it, in season and out of season, constant and instant in the service of your blessed Lord and Master. If you are not, these holy women will put you to shame, and I must send you to this dames' school, old as you are, to learn a little lesson from these godly dames as to how you ought to serve God.

Once more, notwithstanding all that might have been said to make their footsteps slow, we find that they were *not hindered by propriety or indifference*. They travelled to their work as quickly as they could: "and did run to bring his disciples word." Now, one hardly likes to think of Mary Magdalene and that other Mary running. My good sisters here are many of them very diligent in their service, but they do not forget that there is a kind of reputable pace for ladies; yet these holy women ran. They will get out of breath by running! Never mind; never mind. "They did run to bring the disciples word." We are great slaves to propriety, are we not, the most of us? The other day, a brother called out in the middle of a sermon; and on another morning, a sister exclaimed while I was preaching; and some of you thought that it was very improper, did you not? Well, I suppose that it was, but I was very glad of it; and I did not see the slightest objection to the impropriety when I felt that the truth that was being preached was enough to make the stones speak. Why should not those persons cry out? When you are about the Lord's work, you know that it is well to be very quiet and calm, and take things steadily. That is well; but sometimes we can do better than well. We have the steam up, and we cannot help it, and we have to go ahead, and we must go. Thus these godly women were running along. They will put their garments out of shape; they will spoil the look of their faces! I do not know what will not happen; but they do not care about that. "They did run to bring the disciples word." How often have I seen it, in the country, when somebody has stepped into a cottage; perhaps it has been the minister, or some dear Christian friend, and the good woman has said, "I must run and fetch in my neighbour," and she has rushed out of the door, and down the front garden, and across the street, and she has brought her sister or her friend to come and hear the good word, and she has never thought that it was at all improper for her to do it. Dear friend, in the service

of God, impropriety is often piety. It was said that Mr. Rowland Hill "rode upon the back of Order and Decorum." "Well," said he, "I will try to make that true," so he called his two horses Order and Decorum; and thus, if he did not ride on their backs, he made them pull him to and from Surrey Chapel. Order and decorum are hardly worth more than to be used as horses. They are very respectable animals; but sometimes disorder and the want of decorum may be predicated of an earnest, zealous heart, and may be very much to the credit of that heart. "They did run to bring his disciples word." Brethren and sisters, some of us ought to run, for we have not much time. We are getting grey, years are telling upon us; so let us run. We may not have many more opportunities; we may be kept to our bed, or tied to the house; let us run while we can. Sometimes we are warned not to do too much: let us try to do too much; let us be indiscreetly loving to our Lord, let us run to bring the disciples word, even at the cost of putting ourselves out of breath.

I think that we have now learned all that we need to learn from these good women about their being in the way of obedience, that is to say, if we *have* learned it; but have we learned it? Are all of you Christian people who are here to-night running on your Master's errands? Have all of you received a commission from Christ? Have you all had a message from him? Are you carrying it? Some of you are strangers here this evening. Let me beg you not to live a single week without having something to do for your Lord, knowing what it is, and getting to it in the spirit of these holy women.

II. But now, secondly, observe these holy women IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE REWARDED.

First, they were rewarded by *a most delightful visitation:* "As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them." He has ways of meeting his disciples now, in the power of his Spirit, manifesting himself to them. There are some of his disciples who never get these visitations, and I think that it is because they are not running to bring his disciples word. Nobody fidgets a busy person like an idle body. Have you never had a servant doing some work for you, and crawling about in such a way that you could hardly bear yourself? Well now, the Lord Jesus Christ does not feel at home with lazy Christians; and I believe that he reserves his fellowship for the sufferers and the workers. When you are in the way of service, he will meet you. So you have not seen his face for a long time? Have you a class in the Sabbath-school? Are you a tract-distributor? Are you a preacher in the villages? "No, dear sir, I do nothing of the sort." Well, then, I do not think that you will meet him just yet; but I think that, if you had a call to some of these good works, and you obeyed it, it is highly probable that you would then say, "Being in the way, the Lord met with me." Oh, yes, when you have love, and joy, and light in your heart, it will often happen that, while you are talking about Christ to others, you will have a blessing come to your own soul! Many times has it occurred to the preacher that, if he has not edified anybody else, he has preached himself into a right state of heart, and he is sure that he has had one hearer who was the better for the sermon. Beloved Christian brothers and sisters, especially sisters, for the

text, you see, comes from the sisters, and ought to go back to the sisters, get into the path of duty if you would win this reward of a delightful visitation. You sometimes sing,—

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?"

You can answer your own prayer, to a large extent, by running upon your Lord's errands.

The next reward these women received was *a very cheering salutation:* "Jesus met them, saying, All hail." I do not know whether it was in the Hebrew that he spoke; if so, I suppose that he uttered the usual salutation, "Peace be unto you!" As we get it in the Greek, one is inclined to think that he used the Greek language, and spoke the word which signifies, "Rejoice! Joy be unto you!" Our translators very properly thought that the best thing they could do was to give you the old Saxon expression, "All hail! Health be to you! May you be in good health, may you be hale!" "All hail!" You know that we use the expression, "Hail fellow, well met!" Well, that indicates great sociability; and hence you can see the wrong of a Christian saying it to an ungodly man; but Christ comes to his people, and says, "All hail!" I often wonder that he ever used that word, since by it he was betrayed when the traitor said, "Hail, Master!" But yet it was his mother's word. Did not the angel Gabriel say to Mary, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women"? And he used it here, "All hail!" Well, when Jesus Christ comes to us with words of such endearment, such brotherhood, it ought to make us glad.

Last Tuesday night, I saw a brother who, I trust, has just been converted to God. He may be here to-night; if so, he must excuse my telling you this. He cannot read well; but he is teaching himself to read, and he said to me something that touched me very much. He said, "Do you know, I read this week the most wonderful thing I ever heard of; I dare say you know all about it, sir; but it was a very wonderful thing to me"? I asked, "What was it?" "Well," he replied, "you know, I was spelling it over, and I found that Christ said, 'I call you not servants; but I have called you friends.' That knocked me over," he said, "*me* a friend of *his*, me a friend of his? And he calls me so. I was obliged to think that I must have made a mistake, and I had to read it over to see if it could be so, that he really called me a friend. And further down he said, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.' There, I thought, what difference would it make to him if I were offended? And to think of my being offended with him! It is much more likely that he will be offended with me. It is very wonderful." That is a most blessed way of reading the Bible for the first time, to see these wonders as they break upon you. Well, now, it is just as my friend found it to be; the Lord does come to us with very sweet familiarity, he uses what the French call "tutoyage." In speaking to us, he utters the familiar "thee" and "thou"; and he sits down to eat in company with us, calls us to his table, and there bids us eat and drink with him. It is wonderful, as my friend said; but it is thus that Jesus deals with those who love and serve him. And what a reward it is

for the Lord's servants when he says to them, "All hail! I am your Companion; I have done well to meet you; I am glad to see you. All health be to you! Every blessing rest upon you!" Something more than "Salem", the "peace" of the old Covenant, is this "All hail!" of the new Covenant, of which the Incarnate God is the great Expositor. That was the cheering salutation with which the risen Saviour rewarded the obedience of these godly women.

They had also *an assuring satisfaction* as another reward of their obedience, for they were permitted to prove that their Lord was really risen from the dead. Before Thomas had done it, they did it. "They came and held him by the feet." He was no spectre, no phantom; it was no dream that deceived them. Christ was really risen; there he stood in solid flesh and blood, and they held him by the feet. I believe that, when we are at work for the Lord with all our heart, he sometimes enables us to get grips of truth that we do not have at other times, and we lay hold on it with unrelaxing grasp. People talk about "honest doubt"; and ask me to doubt. I cannot doubt; I live in the enjoyment of the eternal facts. I could sooner doubt my own existence than doubt the doctrines of Christ, they have become such substantial verities to me; I have tasted and handled them; I cannot have a doubt about them. It was so with these godly women, they knew that Christ was risen, for they came and held him by the feet.

But, at the same time, they had, mixed with this experience, *a rapturous adoration.* "They held him by the feet, and worshipped him." It is of no use to be persuaded of a doctrine,—that is, mentally to hold it,—unless there is the spirit of worship going with it, so that you adore your Lord while you hold to him and his truth. These women not merely felt that Jesus was there as a man, but they knew that he was also God, they were sure of it, and therefore they worshipped him. It takes a lot of faith, while you are holding a man, to worship him at the same time, because your grip of the human body is a proof of its materialism, and you say to yourself, "This is a man," and therefore you do not worship him; but these women knew that Jesus was God as well as man, so they could mingle the holding by his feet with the worship due to his Godhead. In a natural sense, none of us can exactly imitate these worshipping women; but those who are taught of God the Holy Ghost, and who know how to be familiar and yet to be devout, will draw near to Christ, and hold him by the feet, and at the same time, worship him with solemn awe and sacred joy.

Now, this is the reward that I want my dear friends here to have. I know that the most of you have some work on hand for the Master; if you are getting at all dull and heavy, I beg you not to give it up. Stick to it; but pray the Lord to meet with you. May he meet you here to-night! If not, may he meet you on the way home, or in your bed-chamber! Nothing is so sweet as the sight of our Lord risen from the dead, to know that he lives, and that we also shall live because he lives, and to get a sight of him as alive, and living for us. This puts nerve into us, and sends us back to our service greatly refreshed. That is to be my last point, and upon it I will speak very briefly.

III. Thirdly, notice these holy women IN THE WAY OF OBEDIENCE REFRESHED, for, having seen and touched their Lord, they were now sent away to his brethren.

Before they went forth the second time, *they were perfectly calm, and happy in the Lord.* I think that it is almost essential to any great success in serving the Lord that we should be on the best of terms with him, and not be fluttered, frightened, worried, perturbed, questioning. Having worshipped, and held him, and heard him say, "All hail," you will then feel that, by the power of his love and the authority of his divinity, he sends you forth as his messenger.

Notice, next, that the angel said to the women, "Go quickly, and tell his disciples"; but Jesus said, "Go tell my brethren." Thus, *their commission was sweetened.* And if it be with you as it was with them, you will get to be more tender in the delivery of your message. You will begin to feel nearer of kin to those to whom you speak; you will perceive more of the love of Christ to them. You will not merely be talking in your Sunday-school class to "boys and girls out of the street", you will feel that you are speaking to those of whom Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me." I shall not be preaching to mere "men and women of our fallen race", but to those in whom I hope to find the brethren of my Lord. In seeking to do good, there is nothing like the plan of getting close to the people. Up in Scotland, I have often seen the fishermen standing right in the middle of the river; that is a good place to fish; it is better than being on the bank. Get among the fish, and you will catch them. Get to feel your relationship to the soul you deal with, and your Lord's relationship to him, and you will preach or teach much better than you have ever done in the past. Thus these women went with their commission sweetened by their Lord's loving words, "Go tell *my brethren.*"

Notice, again, that *their confidence in their message was increased.* They believed it when the angel uttered it; but they believed it still more emphatically when their Master repeated it to them. Besides, his telling it to them was the best proof that it was true. He could not have told them that he was risen from the dead, if he had not been risen from the dead. So truth, when it comes to us in Christ, is its own proof. You may doubt it while it is simply preached by men; but you surely will never doubt it when Jesus himself, in his own person, comes to you, and says himself, "This is the truth; open your heart and soul, and receive it." May the Lord do this for many here!

And then, *these women went on their way with increased joy.* They had no great fear, nay, not even a little fear, for their great joy had swallowed up their fear. I should have liked to have seen them go in among the apostles, exclaiming, "The Lord is risen indeed." They might say, "But Mary, we saw you last night looking as miserable as possible." "Ah!" she would answer, "but Christ is risen. I have seen him, and he said to me, 'Be not afraid,' and I am not afraid either of the Jews or of anybody else, for he is risen. He said to me, 'All hail,' and it is all hail; all is well, for the Lord is risen." Testifying of their Lord in this spirit, they expected to be believed, and they were believed. May the Lord put you also into such a condition to-night, that you may say, "I know now more than I ever did before

the truth of my Lord's gospel, and I will tell it as though I could not think that anybody would doubt it. I will tell it expecting that they must believe it;" and they will believe it, for according to your faith so shall it be unto you.

As for you, my dear hearers, who do not know my Lord, how I wish that you did! He is a living Christ; he is no lifeless picture on the walls, not a dead character in a book. He is the living Lord. He has come to us, and given us eternal life; and if you come to him, he will in no wise cast you out. If you only look to him, you shall live. If you take his yoke upon you, and learn of him, you shall find rest unto your souls. I would that you might do so this very night; may the Lord bless you in so doing!

Thus I have preached to you, and now there are some believers to be baptized. That is the second part of our work. At the end of this chapter we read, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We will at another time go on with the teaching that follows this evening's meditation, if the Lord will.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVIII. 1—15.

Verses 1, 2. *In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*

See what concern angels have about our Lord. Are they here to-night? Do they make a habit of coming where the saints meet together? I think they do. We have intimations in Scripture that that is the case. Let us behave ourselves aright to-night "because of the angels"; and as they worship and count it their highest honour to serve the Son of man, let us also worship Jesus, and adore him. What a picture this scene would make!

3, 4. *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*

He said nothing as he rolled back the stone; he did not shake a sword at them, or over them, to thrill them with terror. The presence of perfect purity, the presence of heavenly things, is a terror to ungodly men. May you and I be such that our very presence in company will cast a hush over it! "It was e'en as though an angel shook his wings," they said of one good man, when he spake in common conversation. May there be about us enough of the heavenly to make the powers of evil quail before us!

5. *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye:*

But I notice that they did fear, although the angel said, "Fear not." Neither men nor angels can so speak as to silence fears in trembling hearts; but Jesus can, as we shall see farther on. One word from his lips has infinitely more power than all the words of angels or of saints.

5. *For I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*

And if you and I to-night can truly say that we are on the side of Jesus, that we seek him who was crucified, then we can bear all the shame with

which philosophy would fain cover the cross, and we have no cause for fear. Ridicule and all that it brings from this ungodly generation will not hurt you.

6. *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.*

"As he said." A few words, but what a world of meaning! "As he said." He always does "as he said." He always gives "as he said." He always reveals himself "as he said"; not otherwise. He never fails to fulfil a promise, or forgets even the mode of promising; not only does he do what he said, but as he said: "He is risen, as he said."

6. *Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*

For even the place where he lay is hallowed to you. And, beloved, if there is a place where you have ever had communion with Christ, you will remember it. You might bless the spot of ground where Jesus met with you. Here, to-night, I hope that some of you can see the place where the Lord appeared to you.

7. *And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead;*

Such good news ought to be spread quickly. "Go and tell his disciples," —they are trembling, they have fled,—"that he is risen from the dead."

7. *And, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

Brethren, this is good news for us to-night, though all may not, perhaps, feel the power of it. "He is risen." We have no dead Christ; we serve a living Saviour. He is risen, and therefore he can come to us to-night in the power of his resurrection-life, and he can make us glad. "Behold, he goeth before you into Galilee." There is a great deal about Galilee in Matthew's Gospel; it is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and yet it often talks about Galilee, that border-land which touches Gentiles, as well as the chosen seed of Abraham. There is the place where Jesus will meet his people, in the border-land between Jew and Gentile, there the risen Christ will hold the first general assembly of his Church.

8. *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy;*

What a mixture, fear and joy! But notice that the fear was not great, and the joy was: "Fear and great joy." Observe the proportions of the mixture; and if to-night you have some fear, yet I hope you will have great joy; and then the bitterness of the fear will pass away. A holy fear, mixed with great joy, is one of the sweetest compounds we can bring to God's altar. Some of us have brought those spices with us to-night. These holy women brought other spices to the sepulchre; but these were the spices that they took away from it, "Fear and great joy."

8, 9. *And did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*

He would not let Mary Magdalene do that when they were alone, but he said to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: it is more needful for you to go now and tell my disciples that I have risen from the dead. There will be time by-and-by for further fellowship with me." But now Jesus permits these godly women to hold him by the feet. It was an act of humility, worshipping and holding; and holding not his hands, but his feet. They must have seen the nail-prints before Thomas did, as they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. I do not find that these women ran to the angels, they rather shrank back from them; but they came to Jesus, for we are told that they came, and held him by the feet. I think that there must have been a new attraction about Christ after he had risen from the dead, something more sweet about the tones of his voice, something more charming about the countenance that had been so marred at Gethsemane, and Gabbatha, and Golgotha.

10. *Then said Jesus unto them,*

As he saw their palpitating hearts, and perceived that they were still all in a flurry, for the angel had not dispelled their fears,—

10. *Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

The angel talked of "disciples"; Christ talks of "brethren." He always has the sweeter word.

11. *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.*

While good people were active, bad people were active, too. It is wonderful to think of how much good and evil is being done at the same time. While we are thankful that holy women are running with holy messages for Christ, here come the soldiers of the watch, and they are going in to those vile priests.

12. *And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel,*

They ought at once to have repented when the watch came, and told them that Jesus was risen. Ought they not to have gone, and fallen at his feet, and begged for mercy? But instead of that—

12. *They gave large money unto the soldiers,*

Money, wherever it comes in, seems to do mischief. For money Christ was betrayed, and for money the truth about his resurrection was kept back as far as it could be. Money has had a hardening effect on some of the highest servants of God, and all who have to touch the filthy lucre have need to pray for grace to keep them from being harmed by being brought into contact with it.

13. *Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*

If they were asleep, how did they know what happened? How could they know it if they were asleep? Evidence which is borne by men who were asleep at the time is evidently not worth regarding; but when you have to tell a lie, I suppose that, as any stick is good enough to beat a dog with, any lie will do to slander one whom you hate.

14, 15. *And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught:*

No doubt you have heard of the man who said that he did not believe all the articles of his church because his salary was so small that he could not be expected to believe them all for the money. Oh, the depraving and debasing power of the whole system of bribery and falsehood! May none of us ever be affected by considerations of profit and loss in matters of doctrine, matters of duty, and matters of right and wrong!

15. *And this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*

You may start a lie, but you cannot stop it; there is no telling how long it will live. Let us never teach even the least error to a little child, for it may live on and become a great heresy long after we are dead. There is scarcely any limit to its life and to its power.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—319, 766, 814.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FOLLOWERS OF THE LAMB.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 4th, 1889.

"These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God."—Revelation xiv. 4, 5.

WHATEVER the saints are in heaven, they began to be on earth. There is, no doubt, a perfection of character in the world to come; but the character must be formed here. In the next world there will be no real change; where the tree falls, there it will lie; he that is filthy will be filthy still, he that is holy will be holy still. I am going to talk to you to-night about those who surround the Lamb, and are with him in the blaze of his glory, singing to his honour. I say that what they were in heaven they were in a measure on earth. The life of glory is the life of grace. That life which men have in heaven comes to them in regeneration on earth. When they are born again, they are born for heaven; then it is that they receive the life which lives on throughout the eternal ages. If you do not have that life here, you will never have it. If you die dead in sin, there is nothing for you for ever but the abode of the dead, "where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." To-day is the only time which we have for character-forming. Earth is the great place for making instruments of music; here they are tuned and prepared; up there, they play them; but they will never play them there unless they have had them made and tuned here.

The subject of my discourse will be, first, *a survey of the outline of character of those who are to be with Christ hereafter;* and then, secondly, *a contemplation of the perfect picture of the saints with Christ in glory,* where I trust we, too, shall be, in the Lord's good time.

I do not know whether these verses describe all the saints in heaven. If they do, then you must be like them, or you can never be among them. If, however, they describe the elect of the elect, the innermost

circle of heaven, if they describe the body-guard of Christ, the immortals that perpetually surround him, nearest to his person, the most divinely like him, if they describe a kind of aristocracy of the skies, the nobility of heaven,—and it seems to me that they do, for they are the firstfruits, and the rest of the righteous may be regarded as the harvest afterwards reaped,—if these words describe some special saints, then we should seek to be like them. I would cultivate a holy ambition to be among the brightest stars of God. Why should we not reach to the highest prize of our high calling? If there be any speciality among the redeemed above, should it not be our earnest desire to attain to that standard?

I. So, first, here is AN OUTLINE OF THE CHARACTER OF THOSE BLESSED ONES WHILE THEY ARE HERE.

And, first, notice *their adherence to the doctrine of sacrifice* while they are here: "These are they which follow *the Lamb*." There are some professing Christians who talk much about the example of Christ, but deny the efficacy of his atoning blood; they are not of those who will be in heaven. There are some who magnify the philosophy of Christ; all his ethical teaching is greatly to their taste; but, as to his being a Substitute offered up as a sacrifice on account of human guilt, they cannot away with it. Very well; they cannot enter heaven, for "these are they which follow *the Lamb*;" not Christ only, mark you, but Christ as the Lamb of God's passover, Christ as the Lamb of God slain before the foundation of the world, Christ as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. You cannot be of that blessed number, if you reject Christ as a sacrifice. As for me, and I trust for you also, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" Christianity without the blood of Christ is a dead Christianity; it has nothing to give life to it, "for the blood is the life thereof." If you take away the doctrine of sacrifice, you have taken away the core, the heart, the pith, the marrow of all Christianity. You have left bones for dogs; but you have not left food for immortal spirits. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he should believe in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son: that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." Look, look, look unto him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth, for he is God, even the bleeding Saviour, he is God, and beside him there is none else. May it be said of you all, dear friends, that you followed the Lamb by your adherence to his atoning sacrifice!

Many have thus followed the Lamb in spite of fierce persecution. Remember that brave woman, Ann Askew. When they had racked her, and pulled every limb out of its place, so that she ached all over in her exquisitely delicate frame, yet she sat on the stone floor of her cell, and still defended the sacrifice of Christ. When she had an opportunity to write her thoughts, she penned that quaint verse,—

> "I am not she that list,
> My anchor to let fall,
> For every drizzling mist;
> My ship's substantial."

She thought that being vexed by Popish priests and torn to pieces on the rack was only a drizzling mist, for which it was not worth while to cast her anchor. She was more than a match for fifty priests. God raise us up a race of such men and women! The devil seems to have taken the backbone out of most people. May we begin to know what we do know, and to believe what we do believe, and to put our foot down, and say, "God helping me, I will not forsake my God, nor turn away from his truth." You remember how Martin Luther, when he stood at the Diet of Worms, closed what he had to say when they bade him recant, and he would not. He said, "Here I stand; I can do no other, so help me God;" and thus, invoking the help of his divine Lord, he committed his body to the flames, if need be, sooner than he would renounce a single Word of the Most High, or sin against the light which he had received.

And, next, it is clear of these people that they followed the Lamb by *practically imitating Christ's example*, for it is written, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They so believed in him that—

> "They mark'd the footsteps that he trod,
> His zeal inspired their breast,
> And following their incarnate God,
> Possess the promised rest."

You cannot be with Christ unless you are like Christ. If you have really trusted in Jesus, he will transform you, he will take away from you those evil tendencies and vile propensities which are contrary to holiness, he will work in you to will and to do of his own good pleasure. And the highest holiness for you is to be like Christ. The very noblest possible character to which you could ever reach is to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, in obedience to God, in love to man, in self-sacrifice, in humility, in gentleness, in love. You must follow him whithersoever he goeth, and do what he did, so far as your position makes it fit for you to do it. I mean that you cannot do as he did as God, but you can do what he did as man. Try to put your feet down in the footprints that he has left you. Do aim at complete conformity to Christ; and wherein you fail to reach it, mark that you come so far short of what you ought to be. To be like Christ is that which God intends for you; and unless you have some measure of it now, you will never be with him, for all they who are with Christ above are the people who were made like to Christ here below. Note that very distinctly, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Will you, dear friends, labour to take Christ for your pattern? Do not come and take his name, and then dishonour his character. There are among you some who are very much like your Master; you are the joy of the church. There are among all the churches some who bear Christ's name, but are not like him. My venerable predecessor, Dr. Rippon, used to say of his church that he had in it some of the best people in England; and then he used to add in a low voice, "*and some of the worst.*" I am afraid that I have to say the same; but I am very sorry that I should have to say it. The worst people in the world are those who profess most and do least. Do not be among

that unhappy number; but do, I pray you, by the blessing of God, and the help of his Spirit, be among those who at least endeavour to "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

Now, notice in the sketch of these people that *they recognized a special redemption:* "These were redeemed from among men." Christ had done something for them that he had not done for others. They were not redeemed "among men", but "*from among men.*" They recognized the speciality of Christ's sacrifice. They could read, for instance, a passage like this, and understand its meaning, "Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it," for his church, for his body. "These were redeemed from among men." Come, beloved, do you belong to this company of persons who have been fetched out from the rest of mankind by the power of the Spirit of God, and also by the merit of the precious blood? Do you feel that you are marked with the blood as others are not? Do you belong to a people who are not of the world, even as he that bought them was not of the world? Are you henceforth not of the common multitude, but one who has been bought and paid for by that redemptive price which was found in the veins and the heart of the Redeemer, and are you so redeemed as no longer to be one of the great mass of mankind, but fetched out, called out, chosen, "not your own, but bought with a price"? These are they that will be with Christ hereafter, as specially redeemed ones.

And as they recognized a special redemption, you will observe that *they made a full surrender of themselves to God and to the Lamb*: "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." On a certain day, when the harvest was getting ripe, a man went down to the fields, and plucked an ear here, a handful there, and another handful further on, and he passed along the field, and gathered ears here and ears there, and when he had collected enough for sheaves, he tied them up, and took them to the temple of God, and presented them to the Lord as an offering, to signify that he owed all the harvest to God, and he brought him the first ripe ears as a sacrifice to him. Now, beloved, has the grace of God plucked you out from among the rest of mankind, and do you feel that now you belong to Christ, that you belong to God, that you are not to be gathered with the mass of men for the great condemnation, but that you are presented unto God, and belong to him altogether? It is a very easy thing for me to talk about this; but, believe me, it is by no means an easy thing to carry it out. I see numbers of people who profess to belong to God; but they live as much for money-making as anybody else, they live quite as much for self-seeking as the world does; and it would be difficult, even if you had microscopes on both your eyes, to see any difference between them and worldlings. This will never do. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing." If you are the firstfruits unto God, be so; if you belong to yourself, serve yourself; but if, by the redemption of Christ, you are not your own, but bought with a price, then live as those who are the King's own, who must serve God, and cannot be content unless their every action shall tend to the divine glory, and to the magnifying of Christ Jesus. Now this is what all of us who are truly the Lord's have in outline. Oh, that the sketch

might be properly filled up, that we might become more and more the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb!

I must take you a little further. These people who are to be with Christ, the nearest to him, are *a people free from falsehood.* "In their mouth was found no guile." Brethren, if we profess to be Christians, we must have done with all craft, policy, double-dealing, and the like. The Christian man should be a plain man, who says what he means, and means what he says. I know of no worse suspicion against any man who professes to be a Christian than the suspicion of not being transparent. It were better for us to be simple as fools than to be cunning as hypocrites, even though our cunning should place us in the front rank of the governors of mankind. The Christian man should scorn to tell a lie; exaggeration and equivocation should be strangers to his lips. "In their mouth was found no guile." The Lord Jesus Christ was a great speaker of plain truth; and those whom he chooses to be near him, to be his personal attendants in heaven, must also be free from guile. With many a mistake, with many a weakness, yet, beloved, the saints are free from falsehood. They are true, whatever may be their mistakes. Look to yourselves, and see whether it is so; as I would look to my own soul, I charge you to look to yours.

And then, once more, it is said that they are *free from blemish*; "they are without fault before the throne of God." "Oh!" says one, "I am not without fault." No, but there is the outline of that character in you if you are, indeed, one of the Lord's people; you have already got rid of many faults, and you are getting rid of more; you grieve over what remains, and you will never rest till every sin is conquered. Is it not so, beloved? Saints are not only men of honour, but men of holiness; we would not tolerate any known sin in ourselves. Whenever we are carried into a fault by temptation or by inbred sin, we feel unhappy; we bow low in the dust, and we cry to God for grace, that we may not commit the like sin again. But God's people are a blameless people, after all. If you are to find pure and right characters, where will you find them but among the followers of the Lamb? You know and I know many believers in Christ whose lives are blameless; we would not say that they are absolutely without fault, but still, the grace of God so works in them that we may safely take them for examples, and do as they have done. It was so in the olden time, and it is so now; and unless your character is such that your children may safely imitate it, and your servants may tread in your footsteps, and your neighbours may act as you do without going wrong, how can you hope to be where Jesus is? Jesus Christ receives sinners, but he makes them saints. The gospel opens a great hospital, not for sick men to lie in it and remain sick, but that there they may recover health, and may be made strong. He that believes in Christ is saved, saved in this sense among others, that he is saved from the power of sin, and turned from an unholy and godless life into a life of purity, honesty, and uprightness. "Be not deceived," any of you, to-night, "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." If there be not about you a likeness to Christ, if there be not at least the sketch which I have tried to

depict, then, surely, you are not among those who will be for ever where Jesus is. I have seen an artist make his crayon drawing; he just took a piece of charcoal, and marked out what he was going to draw. I am afraid that is about all that is done with us here. There is an outline made with the charcoal; all the lines of beauty and all the glory of character are yet to be laid on as we grow in grace and in likeness to Christ. But, at least, there must be that sketch. If you have not that, come humbly to the feet of Jesus, and pray that he would begin in you his good work which he will carry on and perfect in the day of his appearing.

Thus much upon the outline of the character of saints while they are upon the earth.

II. Now indulge me for just a few minutes while I try to give you A GLIMPSE OF THE PERFECT PICTURE IN HEAVEN. I cannot really show you the picture; that is in the upper gallery in glory, and you must go up there to see it. I can only tell you my idea of what that picture is like when it is finished.

Well, first, those who are with Christ enjoy *perfect fellowship with him*. Up there, they "follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." They are always with him. There were certain young princes chosen in certain courts to attend upon the king. Wherever the king went, they went; where the court was, there was their abode; their one business was to behold the king's face, and to abide near him. That is the business of the glorified ones of whom I am speaking. When will the day arrive that you and I shall enjoy this perfect fellowship with our glorious King, never absent from him, never doubting his love, never cold in our affection towards him, but being—

"For ever with the Lord"?

Shall I go on with the verse?

"Amen! so let it be!
Life from the dead is in that word,
'Tis immortality!"

Some of you have dear children who have outstripped their mother, and are enjoying this felicity even now. Others of us have mothers, brothers, friends who were very dear to us, who follow the Lamb in glory. How many who once sat amongst us here are now up there, following the Lamb, and he leads them unto living fountains of waters, and all tears are wiped away from their eyes! Oh, to think that wherever my Lord shall go I shall go! When he shall descend from heaven with a shout, we shall come with him. When he shall sit upon his throne to judge the world, his saints shall sit with him. When he shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously for a thousand years, we shall reign with him on the earth. When he shall return to the Father's throne,—

"All his work and warfare done,"

we shall partake of his triumph, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. I vote to cast in my lot with my Lord in life and in death; what say you? My Master, where thou dwellest, I will dwell; if men put thee to shame, I will be put to shame with thee; if thou diest, I

will die with thee, that I may for ever live with thee in thy glory above. Say you not the same, beloved? Say it deep down in your heart to-night.

Well, now, notice in this complete picture, next, that up there *they are perfectly accepted with God:* "These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." God always accepts them; he always looks upon them as his firstfruits, bought with his Son's blood, and brought by his Son into his heavenly temple, to be his for ever. Sometimes here we mar our service; but they never mar it there. Our songs get out of tune, but theirs never know a discord. We praise the Lord, and yet groan, being burdened; but in heaven there are—

> "No groans to mingle with the songs
> Which warble from immortal tongues."

We doubt; we fear; we grieve the Holy Spirit; sometimes we get very sadly out of gear with God. It is never so there; fully redeemed from sin, they are accepted in the Beloved, and to the very top of their bent they know it, and enjoy it. Happy day, happy day, when you and I shall be of them and among them!

Observe, also, that *they have perfect truth there in heart and soul:* "In their mouth was found no guile." "No lie," says the Revised Version. Here, dear friends, we do fall into error inadvertently, and sometimes, I fear me, negligently. We say, not knowingly, more than the truth. How often we say much less than the truth, and almost necessarily so when we speak of divine things; but up there they are not only free from wilful guile and deceit, but they are free from all error and mistake. Happy day! Happy day! Do you not long to be there to be rid of every false doctrine, every wrong opinion, every error, every mistake, so that in your mouth there shall never be guile again? This is what they are above, made perfect. He who washed their hearts here has washed their tongues there. As they loved the truth here, they know the truth there. As they sought it here, they have found it there. As they were willing to die for it here, they live in the enjoyment of it there, and shall do so for ever.

One more feature of that perfect picture is this, *they enjoy perfect sinlessness before God:* "They are without fault before the throne of God." That text brings back to my recollection the second sermon I preached to this church, one Sabbath evening, when we were but few: "They are without fault before the throne of God." I had great joy, as a youth, in expatiating upon the perfect blessing of being altogether "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." If there were any fault in them there, they are where it would be seen, for they are before the throne of the all-seeing God; but even there, in that matchless place of light in which there is no darkness at all, they are declared to be without fault, without blemish. Can you think that you will be of that happy number one day? I had to put it very mildly just now when I spoke of saints being without blame here; but you may put it as strongly as you please when you speak of their being without sin there. They were once, perhaps, before conversion, the very chief of sinners; but in heaven there shall be no trace of their

sin. They will bless the grace that came to them when they were up to their neck in the filth of sin; but there will be no trace of their filthiness left. There is no blood stain on Manasseh, there is no brand of blasphemy on Saul of Tarsus now; they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Some of these men were by nature and by practice, too, so depraved that it looked as if they could never escape from their evil habits. We might have said of them, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may these men, who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." Yet so has the grace of God changed them, that there is no trace of any evil tendency, no propensity to lust, or lewdness, or blasphemy, or any kind of fault.

What a wonderful change it will be for those who were once great sinners to be found without fault; not only without great crime, not only without gross vice, but without fault, and that, too, as I have said, before the throne of God, where, if there were a fault, it would be seen! They are cleansed from all the guilt of sin, and from all the depravity which the habitude of sin brings to men. "They are without fault before the throne of God." Truly, if you had never heard this before, it might make you laugh for joy to think that it should ever be possible that the very chief of sinners, through faith in Christ, might be made so clean as one day to be without fault before the throne of God. I do think that, when we get there, part of the joy of heaven will be a long surprise, an endless wonder; and if we are permitted there to recollect what we used to be, some of you will recall a night of sin, and say, "And yet I am here." You will recall, perhaps, some dreadful passion, some atrocious outburst of foul language, or some terrible occasion of sin, and you will say, "Yet here am I, clean as the driven snow, washed in the blood of Jesus, and renewed by the Spirit of God." Although they always praise God, I think that they must every now and then have a fresh outburst of hallelujahs when they begin to review the past. One says, "I, even after conversion, was a poor, limping Christian, and I was thrown back once or twice with terrible backslidings. My Christian friends despaired of my ever holding on; and yet here I am, without fault before the throne of God. Hallelujah!" Will not a man be obliged to break out like that, and do you not think that all the saints around him will take up the Hallelujah, too, till it goes in swelling chorus all round the choirs of heaven, "Hallelujah to God and the Lamb"? And another one will say, "And I, after I had long known the Lord, fell, oh, so sadly, so grievously! But he would not give me up, he followed me; and by his mighty grace, I was restored, my broken bones were set again, and I was made to sing of free grace and forgiving love. He created in me a new heart, and renewed a right spirit within me; and now I, even I, am here without fault, without a single fault." You can hardly imagine it, can you? You begin to think, "Well, surely that cannot be," for, if you look within, you see so many faults over which you groan; but you will look without and look within, when you once get there, and neither without nor within, in any respect whatever, will you have any kind of fault; for "they are without blemish before the throne of God."

I do not feel inclined to preach any more, but just to shout, "Hallelujah," again and again, at the very thought that I shall be there. Oh, it is hard to go to heaven from such a place as that which I occupy! Your eyes sometimes startle me in my dreams, these thousands of eyes fixed upon one poor mortal man, who has to try to lead you to Christ, and lead you to heaven. Your eyes at times seem to pierce me like so many daggers. I think, sometimes, "What if I am not faithful, if I do not preach plainly, if I do not warn them, if I do not invite them earnestly, if I do not with all my heart cry, 'Come to Christ'? What shall I do in eternity if six thousand pairs of eyes are for ever seeming to stick, like daggers, into my heart?" Oh, but it will not be so! I believe in him that justifieth the ungodly; and I have fully preached him to you, and all my great congregation. My hope is in the precious blood that cleanseth from all sin; and I have pointed all my hearers to that precious blood; and the day will come when I, with all who believe in Jesus, shall be without fault before the throne of God. The very thought of it makes me cry "Hallelujah," and with that I finish. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Say "Hallelujah," all of you. ["*Hallelujah*" *from the congregation.*] Hallelujah! Hallelujah to God and the Lamb! The Lord bless you, for Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

REVELATION XIV.

Verse 1. *And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb—*

John always writes of Jesus as the "Lamb." His Lord is to him in his sacrificial character always "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" by the shedding of his blood. "I looked, and, lo, a Lamb"—

1. *Stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.*

The Revised Version has it, "having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads." Now they are known to be the Lord's; on earth that fact was questioned, but his name is written on their foreheads now. Sometimes they themselves had to question it, but now it is apparent to all, the distinguishing mark is stamped upon their brow: "having his Father's name written in their foreheads."

2. *And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:*

It was very loud, but very sweet. It is not easy in earthly music to blend the two: but in heaven, all the energies of living men shall be thrown into the song; and yet it shall be sweet as the touch of a minstrel when he lays his fingers gently among the strings of the harp.

3. *And they sung as it were a new song before the throne,*

They could not sing any old song there. The songs of earth, sweet as some of them are, are not good enough to be sung in heaven. With a new experience, new delights, and a clearer vision of their Lord, they must have a new song.

3. *And before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

Heaven is not the place to learn that song; it must be learned on the earth.

You must learn here the notes of free grace and dying love; and when you have mastered their melody, you will be able to offer to the Lord the tribute of a grateful heart, even in heaven, and blend it with the harmonies eternal. Suppose, for a moment, that you could go there, and that you were unprepared to sing the new song, you would have to say, "I cannot join in the chorus, for I do not know the tune." You must learn the song now, the new song of praise unto our God, or you cannot be admitted there. I should not expect, if I went down to the Handel Festival, for the conductor to permit me to take a place in the choir. He would ask me, "Can you sing? Have you ever rehearsed the matchless music of Handel?" and when I answered "No," he would tell me to stand aside; so you must learn the music of Calvary, you must learn the music of the name of Jesus, or you cannot sing in heaven. No man could learn the song but the redeemed from the earth; not redeemed, you see, by a general redemption, of which some so loudly talk; but redeemed from among men by a special redemption, which took them out from the rest of mankind, by a price paid for them, so that they were bought as others were not bought, by the precious blood of Jesus, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot.

4. *These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.*

They were pure and chaste in the sight of God.

4. *These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.*

His choice attendants, his body-guard.

4, 5. *These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile:*

"No lie." They were truthful, they were truth-speakers.

5. *For they are without fault—*

Or, blemish.

5. *Before the throne of God.*

Like him with whom they associated, the Lamb of God, they were without blemish and without spot.

6. *And I saw—*

What wonderful sights John saw! I do not wonder that he saw them; he had leaned his head on Christ's bosom, and that qualified him to see what you and I cannot see. Near communion to Christ is the best qualification for a vision of mystery. Get thee into the very heart of Christ, and thou shalt see wonderful things: "I saw"—

6, 7. *Another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him;*

Is this the gospel? It is one version, evidently, of the everlasting gospel. "The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom." Truly, to worship him as he reveals himself, is true godliness; and in it lies all the gospel: "Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him."

7, 8. *For the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen,*

This will not happen till the gospel is fully preached. Superstition does not come down unless true religion is set up. One angel proclaims the everlasting gospel; the next declares that the great system of error is fallen: "Babylon is fallen."

8. *That great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.*

You know that gigantic system of error which professes to come from God, and to be the only true church; but it must fall.

9, 10. *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

They sometimes say that we talk very terribly about the world to come. Do we say more than the Scripture says? Do we use more terrific emblems than the Holy Ghost uses when he speaks after this fashion? This is a generation that is not to be pleased, neither do we seek to please it. God's wrath is terrible, and our language cannot be too strong to express the overwhelming power of it.

11. *And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.*

Keep you true to Christ; wear his name in your forehead. Follow no system of error; do not be deluded either by Ritualism or Rationalism, by superstition or by unbelief. Keep close to the Word of God, and ask to be taught of the Spirit of God.

12, 13. *Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.*

Accursed were they who carried the mark of the beast, and went after falsehood; but blessed are they who follow Christ, even though they die. Dying in the Lord, their works survive them, and they themselves live for ever with him.

14. *And I looked, and behold a white cloud,*

One of these days, every eye will look and see what is here described. A little time may elapse, but it will soon be past. How quickly years fly away! Think where you will be in the day when you, too, will say, "I looked, and behold a white cloud."

14—16. *And upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.*

This is the gathering in of the godly, who are Christ's wheat. He himself reaps them; no angel, mark you, but himself, with his own sharp sickle and with his own dear hand. These are his sheaves, he sowed for wheat; he himself was that wheat which fell into the ground and died, and brought forth much fruit. So he, into his own bosom, gathers his own sheaves with his own hand. "May I be among them!" Make that your prayer to-night. "May I be one golden ear in Christ's great harvest!"

17. *And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.*

Not this time the King, but an angel; not the Son of man that sat on the cloud, but an angel, the servant of God, deputed to execute vengeance.

18, 19. *And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth,*

This is the gathering together of the ungodly, those wicked clusters that ripen in sin, and that become red with iniquity. Christ does not gather them, you see. That is left to an angel to do; he thrust in his sickle, and gathered the grapes of the earth.

19. *And cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.*

Can you see the clusters flung into the winepress? Will you be there? God grant that neither you nor I may, in that terrible day, be among the clusters of the wicked!

20. *And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.*

So terrible will be even the preliminary destruction of the ungodly. Though they grow in clusters, yet shall they perish. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished."

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith" unto each one of us. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—878, 855.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE FAR-OFF, NEAR; THE NEAR, FAR OFF.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 11th, 1889.

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born."—Matthew ii. 1—4.

I AM not going to expound the whole passage that I have read as a text; but I desire to help you to gather some lessons from this familiar narrative.

"When Jesus was born." A stir begins as soon as Christ is born. He has not spoken a word; he has not wrought a miracle; he has not proclaimed a single doctrine; but "when Jesus was born," at the very first, while as yet you hear nothing but infant cries, and can see nothing but infant weakness, still his influence upon the world is manifest. "When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east," and so on. There is infinite power even in an infant Saviour. When Jesus is born in the heart, and there are only the feeblest impulses towards righteousness and repentance with regard to sin, he makes a stir in our whole nature. The most distant faculty feels that something wonderful has happened. When Christ is formed in us, the hope of glory, a sacred revolution commences within us. When Christ is born in a village, a town, a city, the first sinner converted, the first open-air sermon preached, the first giving away of sacred literature, makes a stir. It is wonderful how soon it begins to manifest itself. Somebody or other is affected by the fact that Christ has come; he cannot be hid. The first match struck makes a great blaze. Jesus of Nazareth is so potent a factor in the world of mind that, no sooner is he there in his utmost weakness, a new-born King, than he begins to reign. Before he mounts the throne, friends bring him presents, and his enemies compass his death. Oh, that the Lord Jesus might be here to-night, if it be but as new born, in some few hearts! There will be

a result from Christ's coming, even though I preach him very feebly, though you may say that I can only bring to you an infant Christ, though my power of speech may fail me, and I may but set him forth in his littleness rather than in his greatness. When Christ is born, when Christ is only feebly preached, when Christ is but stammered out, a great result comes of it, and his name is made glorious.

There were two results from Christ's coming, as there always will be, for this Child is not only a Saviour to some, but also a stumbling-block to others. His gospel is either "a savour of life unto life," or else "a savour of death unto death." I want you, first, to notice the note of exclamation that we have in the first verse. "When Jesus was born, *behold.*" *Ecce!* Behold! There is something to look at, something good that is worth gazing upon. Behold it. *Here are far-off persons who come very nigh.* Wise men from the east come and worship the infant Christ; but there is something to which there is no "behold" put, yet it is sorrowfully worth considering. *Here are near ones who are far off*, Herod, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the chief priests, and the scribes. They are as far from Christ as if he had been born in the distant east, while they who lived in the far country came as near to him as if they themselves had dwelt at Bethlehem. So I have these two things to talk about to-night, first, the extraordinary fact that many far-off ones are brought nigh, and the sad but almost equally extraordinary fact that many who are apparently very near never really come nigh to Jesus.

I. To begin, then, at the beginning. THERE ARE FAR-OFF ONES BROUGHT NIGH. God saveth whom he wills to save; his grace is most sovereign. You cannot see, as I do, so many persons brought to Christ without often wondering why they were brought. I have often seen the last first, and the first last; people of whose conversion I should hardly have dreamed become converted, while other persons, for whom I have hoped, and over whom I have prayed, remain unconverted. It is very delightful, as well as very wonderful, to notice the strange way in which the grace of God singles out men, and the marvellous measures which the God of grace uses to bring these men to the feet of Jesus.

Well now, first, these people were *wise men*, magi, students of astronomy, learned in the lore of the ancients. Their philosophy was not a very true one; it was about as true as modern philosophy, which is not saying much. They believed very absurd things, these magi, almost as absurd as the scientists of the present day, perhaps not quite as ridiculous, for science has grown in absurdity, especially of late; but these men were professors of the philosophy of the period. They were the wise men. If they came from Media, they were probably fire-worshippers, or worshippers of the elements of nature. Theirs was a refined form of idolatry, which is not to be excused; but still, if there can be any choice where all is bad, it is perhaps a little better than some others. They were very great students so far as their light went; they sought after knowledge and wisdom. Well now, truth to tell, it is not many of this sort of people who come to Christ. His doctrine is too simple for them; he himself lays the axe too near the root of the tree; his teaching is too plain. They are so wise that his wisdom

baffles them. They know so much, as they think; yet his better and higher knowledge overshadows theirs, and they cannot brook it, and yield to him. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called;" but here the infinite sovereignty of God calls these wise men first; no, I must not say first, for the shepherds came first; but next to the shepherds, the Lord calls these wise men from the distant east. It has been truly remarked that the shepherds did not miss their way; they came to Christ at once, while the wise men, even with a star to guide them, yet missed their way, and went to Jerusalem instead of to Bethlehem, and enquired at the palace of Herod, instead of at the stable where the Christ was born. However, they did come to Christ, even if they did come in a roundabout way, and make a blunder or two. Here was the wonder, that they did come; and if I address myself to-night, as I would do most respectfully, to any here who excel in human wisdom, how I wish they would join divinity to their humanities; and if they know much, yet I long that, with all their knowledge they would know Christ, and with all their gettings that they would get understanding; for the science of Christ crucified is the most excellent of all the sciences. It is the central one round which every true science will revolve in its proper place; and happy is the man whose solar system of knowledge has Christ in the very centre of it. Still, if it be so, I shall not cease to wonder and bless God that he has again brought wise men, like Saul of Tarsus, and like these wise men from the east, to worship this new-born Saviour.

Notice also that these men were not only wise men, which is one cause of our wonder that they sought Christ, but *they lived far away in the east.* We do not know the distance they had travelled; but it does not matter; it was a long way, and probably a very difficult journey, in those days, at any rate. It did not seem likely, when this Child was born at Bethlehem, that worshippers should come outside of Judæa, or that they should come from distant regions unknown to the Jews themselves; but yet God in his mercy called these men from the farthest east. Oh, that his love would light on some to-night who are strangers and foreigners, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, perhaps without God and without hope in the world! May his grace call such! What a mass of people we are, and what odd people there must be here, whom none of us could describe! After this morning's sermon,* somebody told me that, had I known the story of one of my hearers, I should not have dared to describe him as correctly as I did. Happily I did not know that hearer; I am glad that I did not; my message should come all the more distinctly as a voice from God to him, because it did so accurately describe him. But I will breathe this prayer, that somebody here, who is a stranger even to the very form of religion, someone who has never been in this house before, or in any other place of Christian worship, may be called by the mighty voice of God, attracted by the irresistible charms of Christ, and may come and believe in the Incarnate God who took our flesh at Bethlehem, that he might bear our sin, and bear us up to the throne of

* See *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,099, "Concerning the Consolations of God."

God with himself. Here was the double wonder, then, about the magi coming to Christ, they were unlikely men from an unlikely place. As we think of them, we are constrained to say, as we have often sung,—

"How sweet and awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores.

"Pity the nations, O our God!
Constrain the earth to come;
Send thy victorious Word abroad,
And bring the strangers home."

And they were *singularly guided*, were they not? They were watching the midnight heaven, and they spied a strange star. According to astronomers, there was probably a conjunction of two planets about that date. When two planets were in conjunction in 1640, or about that date, it was said that such a conjunction must have taken place at about the time when Christ was born, and that the wise men may have thought it was a new star. I do not, however, think that that can have been the case. It was probably not simply a star, but a marked appearance which moved through the heavens. Well now, it was a strange thing that they should see this star, and more strange still that, seeing it, they should put this and that together, and by their astrology, for perhaps it was nothing better, infer that some wondrous personage was born away there in Judæa, and they must needs go forth to find him. They may have heard of the famous prophecy of Balaam; there might have been traditions in their country that the Coming Man was to be born in Judæa. All that may have been, I do not know; but this I know, God miraculously sent this star. If men are not to be reached in any ordinary way, God's elect shall be brought to him in an extraordinary way. If they are given to the study of the stars, God will write in that illuminated book which they are accustomed to read, and they shall there see a new letter, and learn something fresh concerning his will. I have known the Lord meet with men in the midst of evil, in the very act of sin. We have known men struck down by the most singular accidents and the most extraordinary concatenation of circumstances, men whom it seemed impossible to reach. Beloved, no man is beyond the reach of God. He has ways and means of enlightening the understanding, rousing the conscience, and renewing the heart, of which we know but little. "Remember that Omnipotence has servants everywhere," in the heaven above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. He has means of getting at the hearts of men, and he will do it. If it cannot be done anyhow else, he will make new stars; I was about to say, he will make new heavens and a new earth, but he will call his own. When Christ is born, the wise men from the east must come, and a star shall be sent to guide them. Perhaps, by some remarkable circumstances, you, my friend, are here to-night. It was very unlikely that you should be here; but you have come into the Tabernacle that the grace of God may arrest you, that the hand of eternal love may be laid upon your shoulder, and that you

may be taken prisoner for Christ, henceforth to be his servant, and his alone.

It is worth noticing, again, that these men *earnestly enquired.* Having once seen the star, they hurried off, no matter how long the journey, to find the new-born King, and they asked everybody to tell them the way to him. They even went to the court of Herod to ask the way to find Christ. A man must have a deal of curiosity when he puts his head between the jaws of such a lion as Herod, in order to find what he wants to know. I wish that God would stir up that kind of curiosity and enquiry in many men's minds. The general way now is to put off the truth of God with a huff, to suppose that it is not worth looking into; but the claims of the eternal Son of God, the claims of his grace and of his throne ought not to be treated so. May God give back to the people a spirit of enquiry into the things of God, so that they may not be as indifferent as the masses of our fellow-citizens now are! May they begin to question, and say, "Which is the way to heaven? Who is this Christ? What is the plan of salvation?" If it be so, we shall soon have cause enough for joy, and we shall praise the sovereign grace of God.

Being enquirers, these men were *singularly unprejudiced.* They said, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" "Jews?" Who cared for Jews? Even in those days, Jews were the subject of contempt, for they had aforetime been carried captive into the east. Although they are the very aristocracy of God, his chosen people, yet the nations looked down upon the Jews. Judah was a little paltry territory, insignificant and small; and many asked with Sanballat, "What do these feeble Jews?" But here are men from a great empire, like Persia or Media, asking about the King of the Jews. Surely there are still some candid men about, some who will enquire after Christ, even though they have to ask of Methodists, and Baptists, and the like. Oh, that men could break through the foolish shell of prejudice to enquire if these things indeed are so! The time was when the very word "Evangelical" had a kind of contempt affixed to it; I am not sure that that time has yet quite passed. Yet, whatever others may say or do, let none of us be swayed by prejudice or disdain; but let us search and see whether these things are so.

And note again, that these men, being candid enquirers, were *wonderfully prompt:* "When Jesus was born, there came wise men from the east." Well now, I think that it would naturally strike you that, if a man was born a king, there would be time enough to pay him homage when he grew up. To bring gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, to a babe, does not always commend itself to wise men. Let us see the child become a chit, and the chit become a youth, and the youth become a man; then may we take this long journey to find out His Royal Highness. But, no; when the King was born, and the wise men came to him, they must have started to find him long before. I would that the Lord might put into the hearts of men to-day something like this energy and promptitude about divine things. If God really was incarnate, if he did come here in human form, oh, come, let us go and find him! Let us bow at his shrine, and worship at his feet. Did he really die, and die for guilty men? Did he in their

place and stead bear the desert of their sin? Come, let us seek this "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and let us seek him ere another sun has risen.

And then see, dear friends, how *supremely obedient* they were, how entirely surrendered to the divine impulse that moved them, for they hastened to do what they were bidden to do, and rejoiced as they bowed low before the new-born Child, worshipping and adoring him. They were also *abundantly generous* with their offerings. They brought the best that they could find, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh, and they spread the royal gifts before the royal Child. Lord, send us converts like these wise men! Send us men and women, in great multitudes, who will cheerfully obey, who will find a delight in worshipping Christ, in paying him homage, giving to his service, and in giving themselves to him.

Thus I have tried to show you what the sovereign grace of God did when Christ was born. May the Lord in his mercy do the like to many here! Oh, how often has it happened that, when I least knew it, I was preaching to one who would become afterwards one of our best helpers, one of our most earnest brothers, one of our most fervent sisters! I hope that I am speaking to some such to-night, utter strangers as yet, who will be brought into this church, or into some other church of Jesus Christ, and become not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though as yet they are not numbered with the household of faith.

II. But now, in the second place, I have a sad task; the other was a glad task; but now I have the sad task of noticing THE NIGH ONES FAR OFF.

Here, first, we read that *many were troubled about Christ*. He was but newly born, and yet he troubled them. Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem was troubled with him. It is an unusual thing to hear of a king troubled by a babe. Proud Herod, the fire-eater, troubled by a babe in swaddling bands, lying in a manger? Ah me! how little is the real greatness of wickedness, and how small a power of goodness may bring it grief! Herod was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. So, when some people hear the gospel, and find that it has power in it, they are troubled. Herod was troubled, because he feared that he should lose his throne; he thought that the house of David, in the person of the new-born Child, would take possession of his throne; so he trembled, and was troubled. How many there are who think that, if religion be true, they will lose by it! Business will suffer. There are some businesses that ought to suffer; and as true godliness spreads, they will suffer. I need not indicate them; but those who are engaged in them usually feel that they had better cry out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians," for they get their living by making and selling her shrines, and if their shrines are in danger and their craft is in danger, then they are troubled. There are such; I have known men, who have been leaders in sin, ringleaders in sin, and they have thought that they should lose some of their followers through Christ's coming; so they have been troubled.

But all Jerusalem was troubled with Herod. Why was that? It was most probably because they thought there would be contention. If there

was a new King born, there would be a fight between him and Herod, and there would be trouble for Jerusalem. So there are some men who say, "Do not bring that religion here; it makes such contention. One believes this, and one believes that, and another believes nothing at all. We shall have trouble in the family if we get religion into it." Yes, you will; that is acknowledged in the Scriptures, for our Lord came to bring fire on the earth. He has come, with a sword in his hand, on purpose to fight against everything that is evil; and there will be contention. Hence I do not wonder that the great lovers of ease are troubled.

But the fact is that many are troubled because the gospel interferes with their sin. "If I become a Christian, I cannot live as I have been accustomed to live," says one, "so I will not believe the gospel." The great argument against the Bible is an ungodly life. If you probe to the bottom of the matter, some sinful pleasure is the reason of many a man's infidelity. There is a practical reason against his repenting, he cannot give up his darling sin, he will not give that up; so he is troubled when Christ comes near to him. It is a terrible thing to cling to sin. That Spartan boy, who caught a young fox, and carried it in his bosom, and then, lest the schoolmaster should see it, and chastise him, allowed the fox to go on eating into his flesh till it ate into his heart, is like you. You are hugging this fox, this wolf, this asp, to your bosom all the while we are preaching to you. What comfort can we give you? Quit your sin, or quit all hope. Wilt thou have thy sin and go to hell, or wilt thou leave thy sin and go to heaven? Thou canst not have Christ and sin; the two are diametrically opposed. I will not mention what your sin may be; let your own conscience tell you that. You cannot continue in the practice of any known sin, wilfully and deliberately, and yet find any comfort from the Word of God, or from the gospel. There must be, in your heart's intent and resolve, the quitting of sin, or there cannot be the finding of the Saviour. I have told you before of the two Highlanders, who wanted to row across a certain frith on one occasion. They had been largely helping themselves to whisky before they got into the boat, and they began to row, and they kept on rowing, but they made no progress. They could not understand how it was that, with all their rowing, they kept in the same position till one said, "Sandy, did you pull the anchor up?" No, he had never pulled the anchor up, so there they were, with the anchor down, and pulling away to no purpose. You must have that anchor up, young man, whether it is drink, or lust, or gambling, or pilfering. You are a fool if you pretend to row when you know that the anchor is still sticking in the mud.

Oftentimes, when a man is troubled about religion, he says, "If I become a Christian, I shall have to give up my pleasure;" not that true religion requires us to give up anything which is real pleasure; or, if it makes us give up what affords us pleasure now, it changes our tastes so that it would be no longer a pleasure could we indulge in what we once loved. True religion gives us new pleasures; it takes away our halfpence, and it gives us golden coin instead thereof. It does better than that, but I cannot employ a figure good enough to describe the change. True religion never was designed to make our

pleasures less; and it does not make them less. But still some think that it will do so, and hence their trouble. You would be astonished if you knew why some men oppose true religion. The wife shall not go to a place of worship; there shall not be a Bible in the house; they will not have their boy attending a chapel where there is a prayer-meeting; or they will not allow the master where he is apprenticed to take the boy with him to the house of God. Men say and do all sorts of strange things when they are troubled by Christ; and it is not because they have any real ground for their perplexity. They are troubled about Christ very much for the same reason that Herod and Jerusalem were troubled about him, certainly for no better reason.

Well now, this is very sad, that the gospel, which is meant to be good news to men, should trouble them, that the heavenly offer of free grace should trouble them, that to have heaven gate widely open before them should trouble them, that to be asked to wash themselves or to be washed in the blood of Christ should trouble them. Troubled by infinite mercy! Troubled by almighty love! Yet such is the depravity of human nature that to many who hear the gospel every day, it is still nothing but a trouble to them.

Now there is another case here. It is the same man in another character. *There is one who plays the hypocrite.* "Yes," he says, "there is one who is born King of the Jews. Will you wise men kindly tell me all about it? You say you saw a star. When did the star appear? Be very particular. Did you take note of its movements? You say *you* saw it, and *you* saw it, and *you* saw it. What time in the evening was it first visible? What day of the month did it appear?" Herod is very particular in getting all the information that he can about that star; and now he sends for the doctors of divinity, and the scribes, and the priests, and he says, "When ought this Messiah that you talk about to be born, and where ought he to be born? Tell me." Herod, you see, is a wonderful disciple, is he not? He is sitting at the feet of the doctors; he is willing to be instructed by the magi; and then he finishes up by saying to the wise men, "Go now; you go and worship the new-born King; you are quite right to have come all this distance to worship this Child. Be particular, too, to take notes as to where you find him, and then come and tell me about him, that I also may go and worship him." So we always find that where Christ is, there is a Judas somewhere about. If the gospel comes to any place, there is a certain number of persons who say, "Oh, yes, yes, yes, we shall attend that place!" I know a certain town where there is one true preacher of the gospel, who has won many to Christ; but there are a great many who go there who know nothing at all about Christ. Of course they go to what is called "The Tabernacle" in that place, because it is the right place to attend. I know a town where there is one church, in which Evangelical doctrine is preached, and the good people all used to go to "St. Peter's." It was a kind of patent of respectability to have a pew at St. Peter's, because good Evangelical doctrine was preached there. Well now, that is just how it is with some persons nowadays. A certain number of people would think that all was wrong with them if they did not hear sound doctrine; but all the while they have made up their

minds that sound doctrine shall never change their lives, and shall never affect their inward character. They are hypocrites, just as this man Herod was. They will not have Christ to reign over them. They do not mind hearing about him; they do not mind acknowledging to a certain extent his rights; but they will not yield allegiance to him, they will not practically submit to his rule, and become believers in him. Am I not speaking to some such to-night? I know that I am. Dear friends, do not stop in that state, I pray you. You do not wish to be called a hypocrite; well then, if you cannot bear to be called by that name, do not be such a character. Be true; come to Christ, bow at his feet, accept him as your Lord, trust him to save you, and then rejoice in him as your Saviour and King.

But there were other characters beside the hypocrite who were troubled; and they were *the men who displayed their learning*. These were the scribes and the chief priests who looked in their Bibles, and turned up that passage of the prophet which said where Jesus was to be born. Now, I like these people for looking up their Bibles, and studying the Scriptures; but what I do not like in them is that, while they told Herod that Christ was to be born at Bethlehem, none of them said that they would go to Bethlehem and worship him. Not a living soul of them, not a scribe or a chief priest said, "If this is the Messiah, who was to be born at Bethlehem,—and this remarkable star makes us believe that it is even so,—we will go with the wise men, and worship him." No, not they; they were quite content to have the sacred roll, and read it, and know all about the truth, and yet to leave it there. I used to know, in my youth, certain very sound Calvinistic brethren. I fancy that they were a little too sound, certainly sixteen ounces to the pound with an ounce or two of bone thrown in; and, after they had had a glass or two of beer, they could talk over Scripture better than they could before. I think that the most of those people sleep in the dust. I hope that the whole tribe will; I mean those who live only upon talking sound doctrine without feeling the power of it. But nowadays I meet people "mighty in the Scriptures," yes, and very keen too upon doctrine, who—

> "Could a hair divide
> Betwixt the west and northwest side,"

as regards points of divinity; but as to charity to the poor, as to visiting the needy, as to caring for the souls of men, as to holy living, and as to prevalence in prayer with God, they are nowhere at all. I do pray you to dread a religion which is all in the book. You must have it in the heart; you must have it in the life; or else this Child that was born at Bethlehem will only affect you so far that you turn over the Books of Scripture, and there is an end of the matter so far as you are concerned. Yes, yes, yes, know your Bible, that is good: but practise what your Bible tells you, for that is better. Yes, yes, yes, understand the doctrines of grace, be clear upon them; but love them, live them, for that is better far. Yes, yes, yes, be a sound divine; but let us see a holy humanity about you as well. God grant that it may be so! Otherwise, I tell you, your book-learning will only leave you still an enemy of Christ.

The saddest point is that *none of these people sought Christ;* not Herod with his hypocrisy, nor Jerusalem with its troubles, nor the scribes and priests with their ancient knowledge; none of them sought Christ. May God grant that no hearer of mine may be in that black list! Oh, may we all seek Jesus! May we all find him! May we find him to-night! We shall seek and find him if we really felt in our hearts that hymn that we sang just before the sermon,—

"I need thee, precious Jesus!
For I am full of sin;
My soul is dark and guilty,
My heart is dead within;
I need the cleansing fountain,
Where I can always flee,
The blood of Christ most precious,
The sinner's perfect plea."

There are two prayers with which I wish to close my discourse. One is, "Lord, bring the far-off ones near to-night!" May I beg the thousands of Israel present to-night to pray that prayer? You cannot tell for whom you are praying; you need not know. There may be persons here who are as far from God as they can be. To them I give this text, the word of our exalted Saviour and Lord, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Look, look, look, look! Sinner, look unto him, and be saved!

"There is life for a look at the crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee."

"*For thee.*" "*For thee.*" Then look thou, look now, and find it to be even so.

"There is life at this moment *for thee.*"

The other prayer, and I ask my brothers and sisters here who have power in prayer to pray it, is, "Lord, bring the nigh ones really nigh; these many who are always in this house, and yet not in Christ!" No, I must not say these "many"; I mean, these few; for there are now few who are in that condition. Lord, bring them in! One came the other Monday, and said, "I am one of the few. I have been attending the Tabernacle for many years, and yet I have never told you that I have found the Saviour;" and he came to confess his Master. There are some few of that sort still. Lord, bring them all in! You who are always hearers only, do you ever remember that text, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom"—that is, you people who have heard the gospel ever since you were children—"the children of the kingdom shall be cast out"—pushed aside—"cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth"? Pray that it may not be so with one single hearer of mine to-night, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW II. 1—12.

Verses 1, 2. *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

Observe here that when the Son of God was born into the world, it was in a very lowly village, the village of Bethlehem. Very naturally, the wise men supposed that "the King of the Jews" would be born in the palace, in the metropolis of the country, at Jerusalem; but it pleased the Lord that everything about Christ's birth should have the stamp of lowliness, that the poorest and humblest of men might understand that Christ took not upon him the nature of princes, but the nature of men, not of the great ones of the earth, but of our common humanity. Hence Jesus was born of a lowly virgin, and was but roughly cradled in a manger, and the village chosen as the place of his birth was Bethlehem, well-named the "house of bread", for it is there that the Bread of our souls is found.

The holy child Jesus was born "in the days of Herod the king." The last spark of sovereignty was just dying out. Herod, an alien, held the kingdom under the Roman Empire. Did not old Jacob's prophecy say, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come"? Therefore is it expressly mentioned that Jesus was born "in the days of Herod the king."

We must also remember that, although our Lord's birth is full of every circumstance of humiliation, it has a wondrous glory about it. The magi, probably from Persia, "wise men", philosophers and theologians, heard in far-off lands of his fame; and a star led them to his feet: "There came wise men from the east." They supposed that the birth of Christ would be well known among the Jews, and be a common theme of conversation; so, when they reached Jerusalem, they enquired, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" Ah, when the heart is awakened to the love of Christ, it often dreams that everybody else feels an equal interest in him; but it is not so! The world is dead and cold to Christ; and men look astonished when we ask the question, "Where is he? We have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

These wise men were not Unitarians, who disbelieved the deity of Christ. It has been said by some that they only meant that they were come to pay him the homage of a king. Then, why did they not worship Herod, and why did Herod say that he wished to worship him? It will not do, the thought is not to be endured for a single moment. The magi believed that he who was born King of the Jews was more than a human being, and they had come to worship him.

3. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.*

The wise men brought the best news that ever was told, and yet it troubled people. Does the gospel trouble you, my friend? Then I am afraid you must be of Herod's kith and kin. It is an ill sign of a man's heart when that which is for the good of all men becomes a trouble to him. It is an ill stomach that turns good meat to poison. I suppose "all Jerusalem" was troubled with Herod because they knew that, whenever this gloomy tyrant had a fit upon him, he was sure to draw blood somewhere; therefore they were troubled with him.

4. *And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.*

Think of this vile wretch taking to studying his Bible. Yet there are

some who do the like still. Reckoning that gain is godliness, and therefore turning godliness into gain for sinister motives, they would be religious, and wish to be instructed in the truths of the Bible. Such was Herod; so he gathered all the chief priests and scribes together, and demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5, 6. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.*

Now, you see, what Herod did with an ill design was overruled for good, for thus we know on the highest authority that Christ was born at Bethlehem; the chief priests and scribes, great students of the law, when they were assembled in the presence of Herod, declared that, according to prophecy, Christ was to be born in Bethlehem.

7, 8. *Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*

Covering his bloody design with the pretence of reverence. There is never a worse sin in the world than that which a man covers over with the cloak of religion; let us ever beware of falling into this evil.

9, 10. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.*

You see, the light of the star was taken from them for a time, just as sometimes the delightful presence of God is withdrawn from his people. Then, beloved, you walk by faith alone, and not by sight, as these men did; but oh! when the light comes back again, when, after hearing all the chattering of false priests and scribes, and all the talk of Herod the great one, they see the star again, how glad they are! When God sends to his people clear shinings after rain, the brightness of his presence after a time of gloom, then is it with them as it was with the wise men, "they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

11. *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him:*

The old Reformers used to say, "Here is a bone that sticks in the throat of the Romanists, and they can neither get it up nor down, for it does not say, 'They saw Mary and the young child,' the young child is put first, they came to see him; and it does not say that 'they fell down and worshipped them.'" If ever there was an opportunity for Mariolatry, surely this was the one, when the child was as yet newly-born, and depended so much upon his mother. Why did not the magi say, "Ave Maria!" and commence at once their Mariolatry? Ay, but these were *wise* men; they were not priests from Rome, else might they have done it.

11. *And when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*

The best they had, presents fit for a King; offered as the tribute of the country from which they came, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh being found in the east. It is well to bring to Christ the best we have, and the best of the best: "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh."

12. *And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—538, 256, 574.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

SATAN DEPARTING, ANGELS MINISTERING.

A Sermon

Intended for Reading on Lord's-day, September 17th, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 15th, 1889.

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."—Luke iv. 13.

"Then the devil leaveth him, and behold, angels came and ministered unto him."—Matthew iv. 11.

Beloved friends, we have very much to learn from our Lord's temptation. He was tempted in all points, like as we are. If you will study the temptation of Christ, you will not be ignorant of Satan's devices. If you see how he worsted the enemy, you will learn what weapons to use against your great adversary. If you see how our Lord conquers throughout the whole battle, you will learn that, as you keep close to him, you will be more than conqueror through him that loved you. From our Lord's temptation, we learn, especially, to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Let us never mistake the meaning of that petition. We are to pray that we may not be tempted, for we are poor flesh and blood, and very frail, and it is for us to cry to God, "Lead us not into temptation." But we also learn a great deal from the close of our Lord's great threefold trial. We find him afterwards peaceful, ministered unto by angels, and rejoicing. That should teach us to pray, "But, if we must be tempted, deliver us from the evil," or, as some render it, and very correctly, too, "Deliver us from the evil one." First, we pray that we may not be tempted at all; and then, as a supplement to that prayer, yielding the whole matter to divine wisdom, "If it be needful for our manhood, for our growth in grace, for the verification of our graces, and for God's glory, that we should be tempted, Lord, deliver us from the evil; and especially deliver us from the impersonation of evil, the evil one!"

With that as an introduction, for a short time to-night let me call upon you to notice in our text, first, *the devil leaving the tempted One:* "Then the devil leaveth him." Secondly, we shall keep to Matthew's Gospel, and notice *the angels ministering to the tempted One* after the

fallen angel had left him; and then, thirdly, *the limitation of the rest which we may expect*, the limitation of the time in which Satan will be gone, for Luke puts it, "When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him *for a season*," or, as some put it, "until a fit opportunity," when he would again return, and our great Lord and Master would once more be tried by his wicked wiles.

I. First, we have as the subject for our happy consideration, THE DEVIL LEAVING THE TEMPTED ONE.

When did the devil leave our Lord? *When he had finished the temptation.* It must have been a great relief to our divine Master when Satan left him; the very air must have been purer, and fitter to be breathed. His soul must have felt a great relief when the evil spirit had gone away; but he went not, we are told, until he had finished all the temptation. So Luke puts it: "When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season." Satan will not go till he has shot the last arrow from his quiver. Such is his malice that, as long as he can tempt, he will tempt. His will desires our total destruction; but his power is not equal to his will. God does not give him power such as he would like to possess; there is always a limit set to his assaults. When Satan has tempted you throughout, and ended all his temptation, then he will leave you. You have not yet undergone all forms of temptation; so you may not expect absolutely and altogether to be left by the arch-enemy. It may be a long time, when you are suffering from his attacks, before he will hold his hand, for he will try all that he possibly can to lead you into evil, and to destroy the grace that is in you. Still, he does come to an end with his temptations sooner than he desires; for, as God has said to the mighty sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," so says he to the devil. When he permitted Satan to try the graces of Job, and to prove his sincerity, he let him go just so far, but no farther; and when he asked for a further stretch of power, still there was a limit. There is always a limit to Satan's power; and when he reaches that point, he will be pulled up short, he can do no more. You are never so in the hand of Satan as to be out of the hand of God. You are never so tempted, if you are a believer, that there is not a way of escape for you. God permits you to be tried for many reasons which, perhaps, you could not altogether understand, but which his infinite wisdom understands for you; but he will not suffer the rod of the wicked to rest upon the lot of the righteous. It may fall there, but it shall not rest there. The Lord may let you be put into the fire; but the fire shall be heated no hotter than you are able to bear. "When the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him."

Satan did not depart from Christ, however, until *he had also failed in every temptation.* When the Lord had foiled him at every point, had met every temptation with a text of Holy Scripture, and had proved his own determination to hold fast his integrity, and not let it go, it was not till then that the enemy departed. Oh, brothers and sisters, if you can hold out, if you can stand against this and then against that, if you are proof against frowns and proof against flatteries, if you are proof against prosperity and proof against adversity, if you

are proof against sly insinuations and open attacks, when you have won the day, as by God's grace you will do, even as your Master did, then the enemy will depart from you! "Well," says one, "I wish that he would depart from me, for I have been sorely troubled by him," to which I say most heartily, "Amen."

Let us think, for a minute or two, about when Satan will depart from the child of God, as he did from the great Son of God.

I have no doubt that he will do that when he finds that it is necessary for him to be somewhere else. Satan is not everywhere, and cannot be, for he is not divine. He is not omnipresent; but, as one has said, although he is not everywhere present, it would be hard to say where he is not, for he moves so swiftly, he is such an agile spirit, that he seems to be here and there and everywhere; and where he is not in person, he is represented by that vast host, the legions of fallen spirits, who are under his control; and even where they are not, he carries out his evil devices, so that he leaves the leaven to work, the evil seeds to grow, when he himself has gone elsewhere. Yet it is, probably, not many times in one's life that any man is called actually into conflict with Satan himself personally. There are too many of us now for him to give all his time and strength to one; he has to be somewhere else. Oh, I long to be the means of multiplying the number of God's people by the preaching of the Word, that the gospel of the grace of God may fly abroad, and bring in myriads, that the devil may have more to do, and therefore not be able to give so much of his furious attention, as he does in one direction and another, to the children of God.

He also leaves God's people very quickly when he sees that they are sustained by superior grace. He hopes to catch them when grace is at a low ebb. If he can come upon them when faith is very weak, when hope's eyes are dim, when love has grown cold, then he thinks that he will make an easy capture; but where we are filled with the Spirit as the Master was, (God grant that we may be!) he looks us up and down, and he presently sheers off. Like an old pirate, who hangs about on the look out for merchant vessels, but if he meets with ships that have plenty of guns on board, and hardy hands to give him a warm reception, he goes after some other craft not quite so well able to resist his assaults. Oh, brothers and sisters, be not merely Christians, only barely Christians, with just enough grace to let you see your imperfections; but pray to God to give you mighty grace, that you may "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"; so that, after the devil has tested you, and found that the Lord is with you, that God dwelleth in you, then you may expect that, as it was with your Master, so it will be with you, Satan will leave you.

Sometimes I think, however, that Satan personally leaves us, because he knows that not to be tempted is, to some men, a greater danger than to be tempted. "Oh!" say you, "how can that be?" Brothers, sisters, do you know nothing of carnal security, of being left, as you think, to grow in grace, and to be very calm, very happy, and, as you hope, very useful, and to find beneath you a sea of glass, with not a ripple on the wave? "Yes," say you, "I do know that

experience, and I have been thankful for it." Have you never found creeping over you, at the same time, the idea that you are somebody, that you are getting wonderfully experienced, that you are an eminent child of God, rich and increased in goods; and have you not said, like David, "I shall never be moved"? Possibly you have looked askance on some of your friends, who have been trembling and timid, and crying to God from day to day to keep them. You have been Sir Mighty, you have been Lord Great-One; and everybody must bow down before you. Ah, yes, you have now fallen into a worse condition than even those are in who are tempted of Satan! A calm in the tropics is more to be dreaded than a tempest; in such a calm everything gets to be still and stagnant, the ship scarcely moves, it is like a painted ship on a painted sea, and it gets to be in something like the state described by Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*,—

> "The very deep did rot:
> Alas, that ever this should be!
> And slimy things with legs did crawl
> Over the slimy sea."

"Oh!" say you, "that is horrible." Yes, and that is the tendency of a soul that is at peace with itself, and is not emptied from vessel to vessel. I fear that is often the case with those who believe themselves to be supernaturally holy. A curious fact can be proved by abundant evidence, namely, that the boast of human perfection is closely followed by obscenity and licentiousness. The most unclean sects that have ever defaced the page of history have been founded by those who had the notion that they were beyond temptation, that they had ceased to sin, and never could transgress again. "Ah!" says Satan, "this notion does my work a great deal better than tempting a man. When I tempt him, then he stands up to resist me. He has his eyes open, he grasps his sword, and puts on his helmet, he cries to God, 'Lord, help me!' and he watches night and day; and the more tempted he is, the more he looks to God for strength. But if I leave him quite alone, and he goes to sleep, well then he is not in the battle; and if he begins to feel quite secure, then I can steal in upon him unawares, and make a speedy end of him." This is one reason why Satan leaves some men untempted. A roaring devil is better than a sleeping devil; and there is no temptation much worse than that of never being tempted at all.

Again, I doubt not that Satan leaves us, nay, I know that he does, when the Lord says to him what he said in the wilderness, "Get thee hence, Satan;" and he does say that when he sees one of his poor children dragged about, tortured, wounded, bleeding. He says, "Get thee hence, Satan. I permit thee to fetch in my stray sheep; but not to worry them to death. Get thee hence, Satan." The old hell-dog knows his Master, and he flies at once.

This voice of God will come when the Lord sees that we cast ourselves wholly upon him. In my brother's prayer he suggested to us, if you remember, that in casting our burden upon the Lord we might not be able to get rid of it; the way was to cast ourselves and our burden both upon the Lord. The best way of all is to get rid of the

burden entirely, to cast yourself, but without your burden, upon the Lord. Let me remind you of a story that I once told you, of a gentleman who, riding along in his gig, saw a packman carrying a heavy pack, and asked him if he would like a ride. "Yes, and thank you, sir." But he kept his pack on his back while riding. "Oh!" said the friend, "why do you not take your pack off, and put it down in front?" "Why, sir," he said, "it is so kind of you to give me a ride that I do not like to impose upon your good nature, and I thought that I would carry the pack myself!" "Well," said the other, "but, you see, it makes no difference to me whether you carry it or do not carry it, I have to carry you and your pack; so you had better unstrap it, and put it down in front." So, friend, when you cast your burden upon God, unstrap it. Why should you bear it yourself when God is prepared to bear it? Beloved, there are times when we forget that; but when we can come and absolutely yield ourselves right up, saying, "Lord, here I am, tempted, and poor, and weak; but I come and rest in thee; I know not what to ask at thy hands, but thy servant has said, 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.' I lie at thy feet, my Lord; here I am, here would I be. Do with me as seemeth good in thy sight, only deal in tender mercy with thy servant," then will the Lord rebuke the enemy; the waves of the sea shall be still, and there shall be a great calm.

So much for the devil leaving the tempted One. He does so, he must do so, when God commands it.

II. But now, secondly, let us think of THE ANGELS MINISTERING TO THE TEMPTED ONE.

The angels came and ministered to our Lord after Satan was gone. Notice that they did not come while our Lord was in the battle. Why not? Why, because it was needful that he should tread the wine-press alone, and because it was more glorious for him that of the people there should be none with him! Had there been any angels there to help him in the duel with the adversary, they might have shared the honour of the victory; but they must stay away till the fight is over, and when the foe is gone, then the angels come. It has been noted that it does not say that the angels came very often and ministered to Jesus, as much as to make us think that they were always near, that they hovered within earshot, watching, and ready to interpose if they might. They were a body-guard round about our Lord, even as they are to-day about his people, for "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" But the moment that the fight was over, then the angels came, and ministered to Christ. Why was that?

I suppose, first, because, as man, *he was specially exhausted.* He hungered, we are told, and that proves exhaustion. But, besides that, the strain of forty days' temptation must have been immense. Men can bear up under a strain; but when it is eased, then they fall. Elias can do marvels, he can smite the priests of Baal, and behave like a hero; but, after it is all over, Elijah fails. As man, our Lord was subject to the sinless infirmities of our flesh; and it was needful that

angels should come and minister to him, even as the angel did in the garden, after the agony and bloody sweat.

But it was also because, being man, *he was to partake of the ministry which God had allotted to man.* He has appointed angels to watch over his own people; and, inasmuch as Jesus is our Brother, as the children were partakers of the ministry of angels, he himself also took part with the same, that he might show how he took our weakness upon him, and therefore needed and received that succour which the Father has promised to all his children.

Was it not, again, because *he was so beloved of the angels, and they were so loyal to him?* They must have wondered when they saw him born on earth, and living here in poverty; and when they saw him tempted of the enemy, they must have loathed the adversary. How could Satan be permitted to come so near their pure and holy Master? I think that Milton could have pictured this scene, and that he would have drawn every seraph there as longing to let his falchion of flame find a scabbard in the heart of the foul fiend that dared to come so near to the Prince of purity; but they must not interfere, yet, as soon as ever they might, then they joyfully came and ministered unto him.

And does it not also go to show that *his was a nature very sensitive to the angelic touch?* You and I are coarse, hard-hearted.

> "Myriads of spirits throng the air:
> They are about us now."

Women are to cover their heads in worship "because of the angels." There are many acts of decorum in holy worship that are to be kept up "because of the angels." They are innumerable, they are sent to minister to us; but we are not sentient to them, often we do not perceive them. But Jesus was all tenderness and sensitiveness, and he knew that the angels were there, so it was easy for them to come and minister to him. What they did in ministering to him, we cannot tell. I should certainly think that they sustained his bodily nature, for he hungered, and they readily brought to him food; but they also sustained his mental and his spiritual nature with words of comfort. The sight of them reminded him of his Father's house, reminded him of the glory which he had laid aside. The sight of them proved that the Father did not forget him. He had sent the household troops of heaven to succour and support him. The sight of them must have made him anticipate the day of which the poet sings,—

> "They brought his chariot from above,
> To bear him to his throne;
> Clapp'd their triumphant wings, and cried,
> 'The glorious work is done.'"

Well now, brethren, if we are tempted, shall we have any angels to succour us? Well, we shall have the equivalent of angels, certainly. Oftentimes, after a temptation, God sends his human messengers. Many of you can tell how, when you have been hearing the Word after a bad time of temptation, the gospel message has been wonderfully sweet to you. You have sat in your pew, and said, "God sent that sermon on

purpose for me;" or, if you have not had a sermon, you have read the Bible, and the words have seemed to burn and glow on the page, and you have warmed your soul by their heat. Has it not been so with you often? Are not all the holy things more sweet after trial than they were before? Have you not found them so? I bear my willing witness that never does Christ seem so precious, never do the promises seem so rich and rare, never does Evangelical doctrine cling so closely to my heart, and my heart to it, as after a time of painful trial, when I have been laid aside from holy service, and racked with anguish. Oh, then the angels come and minister to us, in the form of men who preach the Word, or in the form of the living page of God's written Word!

I have noticed, too, that God sometimes cheers his tempted people with clear sunshine after rain, by some very gracious providences. Something happens that they could not have looked for, so pleasant, so altogether helpful, that they have had to burst into singing, though just before they had been sighing. The cage-door was set wide open, and God's bird has had such a flight, and sung so sweetly, as it mounted up to heaven-gate, that the soul seemed transformed into a holy lark in its ascending music. Have not you found the Lord very gracious to you after some severe trial, or some strong temptation? I believe that this will be the testimony of many experienced Christians.

And, as there come these choice providences, so, I do not doubt, there do come actual angels ministering to us, though we are unaware of their presence. They can suggest holy thoughts, I doubt not, to bring us comfort; but, above the angels, far superior to angelic help, is the Holy Ghost the Comforter. How sweetly can he close up every wound, and make it even sing as it heals! He makes the bones that God had broken to rejoice, and fills us with a deeper experience of delight than we have ever known before.

Well now, I suppose that some of you here to-night are in this condition, that Satan has left you, and angels are ministering to you. If so, you are very happy. Bless your God for it. There is a great calm. Thank God for the calm after the storm. I hope, my brother, that you are the stronger for what you have endured, and that the conflict has matured you, and prepared you for something better. Now, what did our Lord do after the devil had left him, and the angels had come to minister to him? Did he go home, and stop there, and begin to sing of his delightful experiences? No, we find him preaching directly afterwards, full of the Spirit of God. He went everywhere, proclaiming the kingdom. He was found in the synagogue, or on the hillside. Just in proportion as the Spirit of God had enabled him to overcome the enemy, we find him going forth to spend that strength in the service of his Lord. O tempted one, hast thou a respite? Spend that respite for him who gave it to thee. Is it calm now, after a storm? Go now, and sow thy fields with the good seed. Hast thou wiped thine eye, and is the salt tear gone? Go, thou, sing a Psalm, then; sing unto thy Well-beloved; and go thou down unto his vineyard, and take the foxes, and prune the vines, and dig about them, and do necessary work for him who has done so much for thee.

List. Thou hast been set free. There are many under bondage to Satan, not as thou art, fighting against him, but his willing slaves. Oh, come, my brother, thy God has set thee free, go after them! Go after the fallen woman, and the drunken man. Go, seek and find the most debauched, the most depraved. Specially look after any of thine own house who have played the prodigal.

> "Oh, come, let us go and find them!
> In the paths of death they roam:
> At the close of the day 'twill be sweet to say,
> 'I have brought some lost one home;'"

and it will be right to say it, if the Lord has dealt so well with thee.

III. Now, I have to close by reminding you of the third point, which is a searching truth, namely, THE LIMITATION OF OUR REST. Satan left Christ "for a season," or until a fit occasion.

Did the devil assail our Lord again? I am not sure that he personally did; but he did so in divers ways by others. I notice that, before long, he tried to entangle him in his speech. That is a very easy thing to do with us. Somebody to-night can take up something that I have said, twist it from its connection, and make it sound and seem totally different from what was meant by it. You know how the Herodians, the Sadducees, and the Pharisees did this with our Lord; they tried to entangle him in his speech. In all that Satan led them on. Satan also actively opposed Christ's ministry, and Christ opposed Satan; but Jesus won the day, for he saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

A more artful plan still was that by which the devil's servants, the demons that were cast out of possessed persons, called Jesus the Son of God. He rebuked them because he did not want any testimony from them. No doubt the devil thought it a very cunning thing to praise the Saviour, because then the Saviour's friends would begin to be suspicious of him, if he was praised by the devil. This was a deep trick; but the Master made him hold his peace. You remember how he said on one occasion, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him." It was something like this, "Down dog! Come out!" Christ is never very polite with Satan; a few words and very strong ones are all that are necessary for this arch-prince of wickedness.

Satan tempted our Lord through Peter. That is a plan that he has often tried with us, setting a friend of ours to do his dirty work. Peter took his Lord, and rebuked him, when he spoke about being spit upon, and put to death; and then the Lord said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" He could see the devil using Peter's tenderness to try to take him off from his self-sacrifice. Oh, how often has Satan tempted us that way, entangling us in our speech, opposing us in our work, praising us out of wicked motives to try to deceive us, and then setting some friend to try to take us off from holy self-denial!

There were also occasional heart-sinkings in our Lord. Thus we read in John xii. 27, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour." He seems to have been very heavy in heart at that time. But the deepest soul-sinking was

when, in the garden, his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." Satan had a hand in that sore trial, for the Lord had said, "The prince of this world cometh," and he said to those who came to arrest him, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." It was a dreadful season. Our Lord's ministry began and ended with a fierce onslaught from Satan. He left him after the temptation; but only for a season.

Well now, dear friends, if we have peace and quietness to-night, and are not tempted, do not let us become self-secure. The devil will come to us again at a fit opportunity. And when will that be? There are a great many fit opportunities with you and with me. One is, *when we have nothing to do.* You know Dr. Watts's lines,—

> "Satan finds some mischief still,
> For idle hands to do."

He will come and attack us *when we are alone;* I mean, when we are sad and lonely, and are sitting still, and moping by ourselves.

But Satan also finds a very fit occasion *when we are in company*, especially when it is very mixed company, a company of persons, perhaps, who are superior to ourselves in education and in station, but who do not fear God. We may easily be overawed and led astray by them. Satan will come then.

I have known him frequently come and find an occasion against the children of God *when we are sick and ill*, the old coward! He knows that we would not mind him when we are in good health; but sometimes when we are down in the dumps through sickness and pain, then it is that he begins to tempt us to despair.

So will he do with us *when we are very poor.* When a man has had a great loss in business, down comes Satan, and insinuates, "Is *this* how God treats his children? God's people are no better off than other people."

Then, *if we are getting on in the world*, he turns it the other way, and he says, "Doth Job fear God for nought? He gets on by his religion." You cannot please the devil anyhow, and you need not want to please him; he can make a temptation for you out of anything.

I am going to say something that will surprise you. One time of great temptation is *when we are very spiritual.* As to myself, I have never been in such supreme danger as when I have led some holy meeting with sacred fervour, and have felt carried away with delight in God. You know that it is easy to be on the Mount of Transfiguration, and then to meet Satan at the foot, as our Lord did when he came down from that hill.

Another time of temptation is *when we have already done wrong.* "Now he begins to slip," says Satan; "I saw him trip; now I will have him down." Oh, for speedy repentance, and an earnest flight to Christ, whenever there has been a grave fault, ay, and before the grave fault comes, that we may be preserved from falling!

And Satan finds a good occasion for tempting us *when we have not sinned.* After we have been tempted, and we have won the day and stood fast, then he comes, and says, "Now, that was well done on your part; you are a splendid saint;" and he who thinks himself a

splendid saint is next door to a shameful sinner, depend upon it; and Satan soon gets the advantage over him.

If you are successful in business or successful in holy work, then Satan will tempt you. If you are not successful, and have had a bad time, then Satan will tempt you. When you have a heavy load to carry, he will tempt you. When that load is taken off, then he will tempt you worse than ever. He will tempt you when you have obtained some blessing that you have been thinking was such a great boon; just as, in the wilderness, when they would cry for flesh, and said that they must have flesh, God gave them their heart's desire, but sent leanness into their soul. Just as you have secured the thing that you are seeking, then comes a temptation; to which all I have to say is this: "Watch." "What I say unto you, I say unto all," said Christ, "Watch. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And by the conflict and the victory of your Master, go into the conflict bravely, and expect to conquer by faith in him, even as he overcame.

But what shall I say to those who are the slaves and the friends of Satan? The Lord have mercy upon you! If you desire to escape, there is only one way. There is the cross, and Christ doth hang upon it. Look to Jesus; he can set you free. He came on purpose to proclaim liberty to the captives. Look and live. Look now, and live now. I implore you, do it, for his dear sake. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE IV. 1—15.

Verse 1. *And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,*

"Full of the Holy Ghost," and then led "into the wilderness" to be tempted. You would not expect that. Yet it is a sadder thing to be led into a wilderness when you are not filled with the Spirit, and a sadder thing to be tempted when the Spirit of God is not resting upon you. The temptation of our Lord was not one to which he wantonly exposed himself, he "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." The Spirit of God may lead us where we shall have to endure trial. If he does so, we are safe; and we shall come off conquerors even as our Master did.

2. *Being forty days tempted of the devil.*

Six weeks of temptation. We read the story of the temptation, perhaps, in six minutes; but it lasted for nearly six weeks: "Forty days tempted of the devil."

2. *And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered.*

It does not appear, therefore, that Jesus hungered while he was fasting. He was miraculously sustained during that period. After fasting, one looks for deeper spiritual feeling, and more holy joy; but the most prominent fact here is that "he afterward hungered." Think not that you have lost the benefit of your devout exercises when you do not at once feel it. Perhaps the very best thing that can happen to you, after much prayer, is a holy hunger; I mean not a natural hunger, as it was with our Lord; but a blessed hungering after divine things. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

3. *And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.*

Satan met the hungry Man, and suited his temptation to his present pangs, to his special weakness at that moment: "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread." The devil suspected, and I think he knew that Jesus was the Son of God; but he began his temptation with an "*if*." He hissed that into the Saviour's ear: "*If* thou be the Son of God."

If you, believer, can be led to doubt your sonship, and to fear that you are not a son of God, Satan will have begun to win the battle. So he begins to storm the fort royal of faith: "*If* thou be the Son of God." Our Lord was the Son of God, but he was then suffering as our Substitute; and in that condition he was a lone and humble man; what if I call him "a common soldier in the ranks"? Satan invites him to work a miracle of an improper kind on his own behalf; but Jesus wrought no miracle for himself. Now, it may be, that the devil is trying some of you to-night. You are very poor, or business is going very awkwardly, and Satan suggests that you should help yourself in an improper manner. He tells you that you can get out of your trouble very easily by some action which, although it may not be strictly right, may not be so very wrong after all. He said to Jesus, "If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread."

4. *And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written,*

That is Christ's sword. See how swiftly he drew it out of its sheath. What a sharp two-edged sword is this to be used against Satan! You also, believer, have this powerful weapon in your hand; let no man take it from you. Believe in the inspiration of Scripture. Just now there is a fierce attack upon the Book of Deuteronomy. It is a very curious thing that all the texts Christ used during the temptation were taken out of Deuteronomy, as if that was to be the very armoury out of which he would select this true Jerusalem blade, with which he should overcome the tempter, "*It is written*," "*It is written*," "*It is said*."

4. *That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.*

"God can sustain me without my turning the stone into bread. God can bring me through my trouble without my saying or doing anything wrong. I am not dependent upon the outward and visible." If you can feel like that, if you can appropriate the promise of God, and quote it to Satan, saying, "It is written," using it as Christ did, you will come off conqueror in the time of temptation even as he did.

5. *And the devil,*

Now he tries him again. There is wave upon wave trying to wash the Son of man off his feet.

5. *Taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.*

Sceptics have asked how that could be done. Well, they had better ask him who did it. He knows more about them, and they know more about him, than I do; but he did it, I am sure, for here it is written, that he "shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time."

6. *And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.*

Does not he talk proudly in the presence of his Lord and Master? What an audacious dog he must have been thus to howl in the presence of him who could have destroyed him by a look or a word, if he had wished to do so!

7, 8. *If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan:*

The temptation annoyed him, it was so foreign to his holy nature, it vexed his gracious spirit, so he cried out indignantly to the tempter: "Get thee behind me, Satan."

8. *For it is written,*

Here flashed forth the sword again.

8. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Then let us pay no reverence, no worship, to any but God. Consciences and minds are made for God alone; before him let us bow; but if all the world were proffered us for a moment's idolatry, let us not fall into the snare of the tempter.

9. *And he brought him to Jerusalem,*

Satan now takes Christ to holy ground. Temptations are generally more severe there.

9. *And set him on a pinnacle of the temple,*

The highest point of all; elevated high above the earth.

9—11. *And said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Now Satan tries to quote Scripture, as he can do when it answers his purpose; but he never quotes it correctly. You young brethren who go out preaching, mind that you do not imitate the devil by quoting part of a text, or quoting Scripture incorrectly. He did it, however, with a purpose; not by misadventure or from forgetfulness; he left out the very necessary words, "In all thy ways." "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." Satan left out those last four words, for it was not the way of a child of God to come down from a pinnacle of the temple headlong into the gulf beneath.

12. *And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*

Do nothing presumptuously. Do nothing which would lead the Lord to act otherwise than according to his settled laws, which are always right and good.

13, 14. *And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season. And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee:*

He had not lost anything by the temptation, "the power of the Spirit" was still upon him.

14, 15. *And there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.*

He became popular; the people resorted to him, and were glad to hear him. He who has had secret temptation and private conflict is prepared to bear open success without being elevated by it. Hast thou stood foot to foot with Satan? Thou wilt think little of the applause or of the attacks of thy fellow-men.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—631, 716, 703.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WHOLE MACHINERY OF SALVATION.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 18th, 1889.

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"—Romans x. 14, 15.

PLEASE notice, dear friends, that in the thirteenth verse we have the way of salvation set before us in the plainest terms: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." I remember well when I lived on that verse for many months. I longed for salvation; I could not see that there was any way of hope for me; I thought that I must be left out, that I was too sinful, or too hard, or too something or other, so that others might be saved, but I should not be. But when I read this verse, I did what I ask you to do, I caught at it; it seemed like a life-line thrown to a sinking man. I clung to it, and it became a life-buoy to me: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "Ah!" thought I, "I do call on that blessed name, I will call on that glorious name; if I perish, I will never cease to invoke that sacred name." An invocation of the name of God, a trusting in God, and a consequent calling upon God and acknowledgment of God, this it is that saves the soul.

But I must get you to notice these words a little more in detail. There is here, first, *a wide word*, a *very* wide word: "*Whosoever* shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." "*Whosoever*." I have heard that, when a person is making his will, if he wishes to leave all he has to one person, say to his wife, if he just says so, that is the best thing he can do; but he had better not go into details, and begin making a list of what he is leaving, because he will probably leave something or other out. Now, in order to make this will of God very distinct, he does not go into any detail, but he just says, "Whosoever." That means the black man, and the red man, and

the yellow man, and the white man. It means the rich man, and the poor man, and the man who is not a man. It means everybody of every sort, and those who are of no sort at all, or of all sorts put together. "Whosoever." That includes me, I am sure; but I am equally certain that it includes you, you in the aisles who were never here before, you who are quite unknown in London, you who are a stranger and a foreigner, whoever you may be. It is much better to have it put so, without going into detail, because otherwise somebody might be left out. I have often thought that, if I had read in Scripture that "If Charles Haddon Spurgeon shall call upon the name of the Lord, he shall be saved," I should not have felt half as sure of salvation as I do now, because I should have concluded that there might have been somebody else of that name, and very likely there is, and I should have said, "Surely it did not mean me"; but when the Lord says "Whosoever", I cannot get out of that circle. It is a big net that seems to entangle all men in its meshes. "Whosoever." If I call upon the name of the Lord, if you call upon the name of the Lord, if the man who lies upstairs a-dying calls upon the name of the Lord, we shall be saved. What a wide word that "whosoever" is!

And then, next, what *an easy word* we have here! "Whosoever shall *call* upon the name of the Lord." Anybody can call upon the name of the Lord. Everybody understands what it is to call "Hi, there!" Have you not often used such a call as that? And if you have been in distress or danger, have you never called, "Help, help, help"? Very well, he who can thus call, let him call upon God, invoke his help, clamour for his mercy, crave his pity. If he does that in a believing way, as we shall have to show you, trusting that God will hear him, he shall be saved. So there is no difficulty here that wants a doctor of divinity to explain; the truth is put mainly in monosyllabic words: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." It is as plain as a pikestaff. Oh, that you might see it, and begin to call upon the name of the Lord by earnest prayer!

But here is another word, *a sure word:* "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall* be saved." There is no "if" here; no "may be" here; but a glorious "*shall*." Our shalls and wills are poor, puny things; but God's "shall" is firm as the eternal mountains. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," as surely as there is a God. The Lord has made no mistake; he will not revoke his declaration by changing his mind. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved*." Oh, that many would call upon his name, to-night, and find immediate salvation, which will last them throughout life, and throughout eternity, for "shall be saved" reaches a very long way, even throughout the eternal ages that are yet to come.

Now here, you see, friends, we have a wonderful remedy for the disease of sin, very simple and very abundant; but the difficulty is to get it to the people who need it. I am going to talk about that matter in very plain language, because I want to be very practical, and I pray that God's Spirit may make my whole discourse to be so.

In our text there are four necessities upon which Paul insists.

Praying to God, calling upon his name, will save a man; but first, *there is no praying aright without believing:* "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" But, secondly, *there is no believing without hearing:* "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Thirdly, *there is no hearing without a preacher:* "How shall they hear without a preacher?" And fourthly, and lastly, *there is no effective preaching without being sent:* "How shall they preach except they be sent?"

I. First, then, THERE IS NO PRAYING ARIGHT WITHOUT BELIEVING, from which I gather this moral, then let us believe. Since we must pray, and only by prayer can find salvation, and there is no praying without believing, may the Lord help us to believe, for how shall we pray aright unless we do believe?

I think that I have persons here to-night who have commenced to pray, who have begun pleading with God. I hope, dear friends, nay, I feel sure of it, that, if that prayer is sincere, there is a measure of faith in it, for would you ask God to save you if you did not believe that *you needed to be saved?* There is a measure of faith in that. Would you ask God to save you if you did not think that *there is a way of salvation by which he can save you?* There is a measure of faith in believing that. I think that you believe that *there is a Saviour.* There is a measure of faith in that; and, I hope, a measure of saving faith, too, in your believing that, notwithstanding all your sins and sinfulness, there is a Saviour provided, who is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him. You may not have much faith; but you must have some faith if you are really praying to God from your heart, and entreating him to save you.

I think, too, that you must have a little faith that *the Saviour will save you.* You have been praying to him to do it. Would you have expressed that desire, and have come to him in prayer about it, unless there was some kind of sediment of faith in your heart? I want to put it very gently to you, yet very plainly. Remember, faith is not measured by the quantity, but by the quality. A man of strong faith is happier, but he is not more truly saved, than a man of weak faith, so long as he has any faith at all. If yours is only feeble faith, the Lord will say to you, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The faith that comes behind Christ, and touches the hem of his garment, is a saving faith; and I think that is what you are doing when you say, "Lord Jesus, save me." If this is a real prayer, and not a sham one, if it comes from your heart, there is, at any rate, a tint, a shade, if not an actual colour of faith, upon your soul already. How could you call on him in whom you have not believed? Would we call for help from a person who we did not think would help us or could help us? No; the mere fact of calling upon anyone for help proves that we have some measure of confidence in that person, that he can and will help us. Well, if thou believest as much as that concerning Christ, and if thou wilt cast thyself upon him, believing that thou shalt be saved, I would that thou hadst more faith, but even that little faith will bear thee into heaven.

You believe also that *Christ can and does hear you.* Ah, you would not have been alone upstairs this afternoon, crying for mercy, if you

had thought that there was nobody to hear you! Rational beings do not go and ask of nobody. You believe that Christ is able to hear you, and you have some faith that he does hear you, for which I am very thankful indeed.

I think that I may add that *you are measurably trusting to Christ.* Certainly, you are not trusting to anybody else. The fact that you often pray to him for mercy, for the pardon of sin, for the renewal of your nature, proves that you have some degree, at least, some faint measure of faith in him. Now, let me exhort you, while you keep on praying, to mix more faith with your praying. "With all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt," and with all thy prayings thou shalt offer faith. When thou askest anything of God, believe, and thou shalt receive. When thou dost appeal to his mercy, believe in the mercy. When thou art pleading for his help, believe in the help, for there is much power in faith. "According to your faith, be it unto you."

You all know, surely, what believing is. You say, "I shall go home to pray." No, no, no; believe, and pray as much as ever you like, and a believing prayer will save you. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"; but "how then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Faith comes first. Believe, then, before you do anything else. May God, of his great mercy, enable some poor sinner to have done with doings and with feelings, and to trust, just to trust Jesus! There you are, hanging up there in a tree; you are afraid of falling down, so you cling with all your might. Suppose that a strong man comes underneath, and says, "Here, drop into my arms; I will catch you, I am able to bear your weight." If you trust him, you will drop into his arms. That is what you have to do with Christ to-night; *trust him*, and let go every other confidence; just drop into his arms, and you shall be saved. Remember, then, this first lesson, that there is no praying aright without believing.

II. Now we go another step, and come to the second necessity. THERE IS NO BELIEVING WITHOUT HEARING: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"

The word "heard" is to be understood in a wide sense. Reading is a kind of hearing. It is not merely listening with the ear; but *you must, by some means or other, come to a knowledge of the truth*, and you cannot know what you do not hear, or read, or learn. The truth must come under your notice, so that you are aware of it, or else there can be no faith in you concerning it. I hope that none of you ever believe with the faith of the man who, when he was asked what he believed, said that he believed what the church believed. "Well," said one, "what does the church believe?" "Oh!" he replied, "the church believes what I believe." "Well, then, please tell me, what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing," answered he; and he could be got no farther. Now, there is no faith in that at all; it is simple ignorance, and nothing more. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Why, to believe a thing is to know the ins and outs of it! To get at it by reading it or hearing it, are only different forms of the same thing.

Well, now, if any man here desires faith, what should he do to obtain it? Sit still, and say, "I will try to believe"? Certainly not. Suppose that I were to announce to you to-night that the Czar of all the Russias is dead, and you said that you wished to believe it. You could not believe it by an effort of your mind; you would enquire for evidence of the truth of my statement, or you would wait till you saw the telegrams to-morrow, and so you would learn whether it was true or not. It is not a distinct act of the will alone that brings faith: "Faith cometh by hearing."

Listen, then. *The oftener you hear the gospel, the better;* I mean you who have not yet believed it. As you are hearing it, you may come to believe it. It may insensibly, as it were, steal over you. Having heard it, and heard it, and heard it, again and again, you may at last find yourself believing that Jesus suffered on the cross for you. I recommend all seekers after Christ to hear the Word often.

Take another piece of advice. *Hear better;* hear with both your ears at once; hearken as you would listen if the preacher were telling you how you could make a fortune in ten minutes. How everybody would listen, how everyone would want to have a front seat, so as to make no mistake! How the pencils would go to work to take down the instructions! Hear that way, for there is more at stake than a fortune, even your immortal soul. Heaven and hell hang upon the hearing or not hearing of the Word. Hear often, and hear well.

But *so hear as to try to understand it*, and if you cannot meet with the preacher who seems to proclaim an all-round gospel, do what is better, go to the Bible itself. Read this blessed Book through studiously, with such helps as good men can give you. Yes, try and understand the truth, and prove it by experience. Come to this Book, and come to the house of prayer with this thought on your mind, "There is a something that I have to believe, and I am going to know what it is; I am going to know the top of it and the bottom of it, the head and the front and the heart of it; and, at any rate, I will, if I can, know what it is, and what are the grounds and reasons for it." Hearing thus, you will believe it.

There let me leave that point, then. Hear the gospel; only mind that what you hear is the gospel. You can hear some very smart sermons, and very clever sermons; and, as a rule, I may say that the cleverer they are, the worse they are; where you see so much of the man, you will see very little of his Master; when everything seems yielded up to the turning of the phrases, putting the thing very grandly, and carrying you away with wonderful eloquence, the gospel itself gets put out of sight. Let the eloquent men have a shop for themselves on a Monday; but let us have the Sabbath-day given up to plain dealing with the souls of men. We want none of this word-daubing; men are going to heaven or to hell, and it is time that we came to close grips with them about this all-important matter. God help us so to do! Hear that which really is aimed at your heart and conscience; hear that which tells of Christ, and heaven, and the way thither; hearing that, you are on the way to believing it.

III. Thirdly, THERE IS NO HEARING WITHOUT A PREACHER: "and how shall they hear without a preacher?" Therefore, let us preach.

Someone must make the truth known to men. They will not find out about the Saviour unless they are told of him. The gospel will not be revealed to men by any supernatural agency; we must go with it. They cannot learn it without being taught it. No man will know the gospel unless somebody shall tell it to him, by word of mouth, or by the gift of a book or a tract, or by a letter, or by the open preaching of the Word. Somebody must make it known to the man, for how can he believe in him of whom he has not heard, and how can he hear without a preacher?

Who ought to preach, then? *Everyone who can preach, should do so.* The gift of preaching is the responsibility for preaching. I often wonder at some Christian men who can fire away so grandly on the hustings, or the platform, but who never speak for Christ; they will have to account for those prostituted tongues. If a man can speak upon the temperance question, he can speak upon the salvation question; let him take care that he does so. I do not wish him to be silent on the one, but I do earnestly entreat him not to be silent on the other. There are a great many persons who ought to preach the gospel, but who do not. Every man who knows the gospel ought to make it known. "Let him that heareth say, Come." When you hear the gospel, tell it to somebody else; you Christian people are all bound, in proportion to your gifts and your opportunity, to make the gospel known. "Why!" says one, "I thought that work was for priests." Just so, it is only for priests; but then all believers are priests. By his mighty grace, our Lord Jesus Christ hath made us kings and priests unto God; and it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to exercise this blessed priestly function of telling to the sons of men the way whereby they may be saved. Each man, then, in this place, who knows Christ, and each woman and each young person, too, are bound to tell of Christ in some way or other to all who are round about them.

For this work, *a high degree of gifts is not required.* It does not say, "How shall they hear without a doctor of divinity?" It does not say, "How shall they hear without a popular preacher?" Oh, dear! some of us would have been lost if we could not have been saved without hearing a man of great abilities. I thank God that I owe my conversion to Christ to an unknown person, who certainly was no minister in the ordinary acceptation of the term; but who could say this much, "Look unto Christ, and be saved, all ye ends of the earth." I learned my theology, from which I have never swerved, from an old woman who was cook in the house where I was an usher. She could talk about the deep things of God; and as I sat and heard what she had to say, as an aged Christian, of what the Lord had done for her, I learned more from her instruction than from anybody I have ever met with since. It does not require a college training to enable you to tell about Christ; some of the best workers in this church have little enough of education, but they bring many to Christ. Go on, my dear brothers and sisters, telling of Christ's love to you, even if you have very few gifts.

Remember that, *when you have told out the story of the cross to men, you are rid of one responsibility.* At any rate, if they perish, it will

not be because they did not know; and if they perish through ignorance, it will not be that their ignorance was through your neglect in teaching them. Now, to-night, I wish that I could stir up everyone here to become a preacher, women and all; not that I care much for women preaching, but I want them to preach in the sense in which I have laid the matter down; that is, to make known to somebody the wondrous story of the cross. Speak to an individual, if you can. If you cannot do that, write. If you cannot write, send a sermon, or give a tract. Only do keep on making Christ known. I suppose that there are two or three thousand believers here to-night out of these six thousand people. If every one of you Christians would every day make Christ known to somebody, what a missionary organization we should be! How can they hear without a preacher? Now, let every one of you become, in the sense in which the text means it, a preacher, by telling out in some form or other, and making known in some way or other, the wondrous doctrine of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.

It is pitiable that anybody should live and die without knowing the gospel. You can have no idea, unless you go into the houses in many of our streets, what absolute ignorance there is in this city of London about the simple elements of the gospel of Christ. City missionaries have often told me stories that have amazed and appalled me. You think, because so many come to some of our houses of prayer, that the people of London go into the house of God. There is at least a million of people, and perhaps two millions, who never attend any place of worship at all. There would be three millions, I suppose, out of our five millions, who only occasionally go to any place of worship at all. Why speak of "heathendom"? We have it at our doors. The more earnest a man is to win souls, the more he is shocked, amazed, and appalled by the necessity there is to keep on making known the gospel of Christ. And now they are starting new theologies, inventing falsehoods. Up with you, men and Christians! Publish Christ again. The only way to put this false fire out is with the old fire of the gospel; men fear that fire. Put down the new heresy with the old orthodoxy. Bring out Christ crucified. Cry again, with Luther's earnestness, "Believe and live!" Cry again, with Calvinistic determination, "Salvation is all of grace, of grace alone, through faith in Jesus Christ." I would to God that we might all preach thus. If we had but all our church-members resolved to testify the gospel of the grace of God, then should we see men hearing; then should we find men believing; and men believing are men saved.

IV. So I come to the fourth necessity, with which I shall close. THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE PREACHING WITHOUT BEING SENT: "and how shall they preach, except they be sent?"

"Ah!" says one, "now we have you in a corner. We must not all go and preach, if we are not sent." If *you* are not sent, do not go.

But what does it mean, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" A man who goes to tell others about Christ must feel that he is sent to do it, or he will never do it properly and effectively.

The man who is sent, first of all, *has a message given to him.* You do not say to your servant, "You go north, south, east, west, and that is

all." No, if you send him, you give him a message: "Go and say to Mr. So-and-so, this and that;" or you write it down, and you say, "Deliver that letter to such a person." You do not leave him to go and say whatever he likes: "John, I want you to call on Mr. So-and-so to-morrow morning, and to say whatever first comes into your head." You do not act like that, do you? Yet that is the notion some people have, nowadays, of what a preacher is; he is a man who makes his message up as he goes along; he is a "thinker"; he excogitates the gospel out of his own brains. I have heard of a German who is said to have constructed a camel out of his own consciousness. Very likely; but I am sure that nobody will construct the gospel that way. He must receive it by the revelation of God. The other plan is not Paul's notion, for he asks, "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" First, then, get your message, be determined to know nothing among men but what the Lord himself has revealed to you in his Word, by the teaching of his Spirit. Get it well into you; say to yourself, "What I am going to speak is nothing of my own; else it would fall flat and powerless; but I am going with, 'Thus saith the Lord.' This is God's message." Then, if you are sent, you will preach, and you will so preach that men will hear; and they will so hear that they will believe; and they will so believe that they will be saved. But you must go as a God-sent man, having received your message from the mouth of your Master.

Next, I think that, even if we get a message from God, we want something more than that, *there must be an impulse felt within*, that shall compel us to speak of Christ. If you merely go and flippantly talk about Jesus Christ to people, you may as well talk about anything else; but if you pity them, if you love them, if you feel that they must not be lost, that you cannot bear the thought of it, if it is in your mind, so that you cannot sleep while you are thinking of such an one because he is going down to perdition, if it gets such a burden that it oppresses you, and weighs you down, so that you must speak to somebody about his soul, ah, then you will speak, for you will feel that you are sent! Now, my impression is that, if we are in a right state of heart, we shall always feel like that. If a Christian man were in a right condition of heart, whether he found himself in the train, or along a country road, or at the railway-station, or in the police-court, or waiting in the lobby of a house, or anywhere, he would begin at once to deal with the person with whom he came into contact about his soul. I wish that it were your habit to be always looking out for souls. Up, then, ye Christian men, and seek as God shall help you, by every means in your power, to make known Christ to the dying all around you! But you will not do it unless you are sent, driven, impelled, forced; you will not win souls for Christ till the gospel is like a fire in your bones, and you feel that woe is unto you if you do not preach it.

Well now, before you go to try to do that, there is one thing more. You cannot do it effectively unless you are sent; and to be sent means to have *power given you with which to do the work*. Can that power be had? If you feel impelled to cry to God to give you the power to preach, the spiritual power, the power of the Holy Ghost, if you are impelled to teach in the Sunday-school,—and it is not worth doing

unless you feel that you are impelled to it, and sent to it,—then pray for the power to win the souls of those dear children for Christ. If you feel called upon to write a letter to a friend to-morrow about his soul or her soul, do it because you feel called upon to do it; but pray to God to show you how to do it. Pray to him to put the power into the words that you utter, that you may say the right words, and put even the right tone into those words. There is a good deal even in the tone of the preacher. "How shall they preach, except they be sent?" They must be clothed with divine power; but the Lord can clothe even a child with that power; he has often done it. He can clothe a humble Christian woman, who never spoke in public, with the power to win souls; he has often done it. And you, brother, who have been quite satisfied to be a church-member and to do nothing for Christ,—a most unsatisfactory state of things indeed,—should begin to be doing something for him who has done so much for you. First tarry at Jerusalem till you are endued with power from on high; and then go forth as Christ's witnesses; for how shall you preach, except you be sent? But the power being obtained, you must go forth, and tell out the message that your Lord has given you.

But you have not done it all till you have *given a report to your Master*. If you have been sent, you will go back to your Lord after you have delivered his message, and you will tell him what they have to say about it. Every man who is sent on an errand gives an answer by-and-by as to the reply of the person to whom he was sent. I am afraid that some teachers and preachers forget this. We ought to go, like Isaiah, back to the Master, and say, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" You have tried hard with Mary to bring her to Christ; did you ever tell the Master about Mary? Mother, you have tried hard with your boy to bring him to the Saviour; have you ever told Jesus about your boy? Last Tuesday night, there were a mother and father who had a son about whom they had once been very hopeful; but he had left home, and gone away for weeks, though he promised to return. He had gone off, and they had not heard a word about him. They came to a company of Christian people, last Tuesday night, broken-hearted. They had done their best to find their son, but they could not find him. It was to Haddon Hall that they came, and the people of God there prayed for his father and mother. The father himself prayed, and broke down with emotion about his lost son. He went home, and there was a letter from his son to say that the Saviour had found him. He had given up the drink, and he hoped to be a comfort to his father and mother all the rest of their days. He was many miles away, and knew nothing of his father's prayer. Often, when you do not get on with people, go and tell the Lord Jesus Christ about it; say, "Lord, I have preached to them, I have prayed for them, I have talked to them, I have wept over them, I bear them on my heart as a burden. Their very name seems to burn itself with letters of fire into my soul. Lord, save them! Lord, save them, and they will be saved!" That is the way to win souls. If God works, he first of all makes us travail in birth for the souls of others, and then are they born into the kingdom.

The rest of the text is a kind of vision. The prophet sees persons coming down the mountain side; he looks at them, and perceives that they are not men of war; else the greaves upon their legs would be terrible to the peaceful inhabitants of the plain. Yet here they come, a great company from the mountain tops, descending into the valleys. Who are they? As he looks, he says, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" They are coming bearing the white flag, servants of the great King with whom you have been at war. They bear the banner that speaks of peace with God.

We, to whom the text alludes, who are the preachers of this gospel of peace, say to you to-night: Sinner, throw down your weapons of rebellion. Guilty one, fight no longer against God; come, and be at peace with him. His peace is proclaimed to you through Jesus Christ. He will freely forgive you every transgression and iniquity; he is ready to forget and blot it all out. God invites you to be reconciled to him, to have done with warring against him. We preach peace to you; and, if you hear us, we then tell you glad tidings of good things, full pardon for all the past, a change of heart to be given to you, to make you a new creature in Christ Jesus,—yes, to be given you to-night, before you leave the Tabernacle,—help for the future to strive against sin; strength to conquer and tread the dragon beneath your feet, power to become a child of God, to become an heir of heaven, to be taken under the guardian wing of providence, to be directed by the infinite wisdom of the Holy Spirit. These glad tidings of good things are published to all of you, even you that are farthest off from Christ, and hope, and peace. Believe in Jesus; trust him; trust God in human flesh, trust him who bled to death upon the cross, and paid down the ransom for your soul, and trust him now. He will do all for you that you need to have done for you, and he will save you, and bring you to his right hand in glory.

Now I have talked all in vain unless the Lord shall apply the truth to you, and you believe it; do not wait for somebody to believe for you; trust Christ for yourself; believe in Jesus even now. Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS X.

Verse 1. *Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.*

Desire is the mother and the soul of prayer: "My heart's desire and prayer." These Israelites had hunted Paul about, and sought to kill him. They were his deadly enemies; but the only return he made them was to pray that they might be saved. I hope you will never have a worse wish for your worst foe.

2. *For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

Always see all the good that is to be seen; and, when you have to reprove and rebuke, begin by admitting what is good: "They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."

3. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

They were very zealous; but it was blind zeal. They were very energetic; but they used their energy in going the wrong way. God has a righteousness, and our wisest course is to submit to it. Our righteousness, if we set it up in opposition to God's way of salvation, will only increase our sin. You can be ruined by your righteousness, as surely as by your unrighteousness, if you set it in the place of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

4. *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*

If we get Christ by believing, we have the righteousness of the law. All that ever could come to us by the highest and most perfect obedience to the law, we get by faith in Christ Jesus.

5. *For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law,*

And being the one through whom the law was given, he knew how to describe it; and we may be sure that he made no mistake. This is his description of legal righteousness:—

5. *That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.*

That is it: "Do and live." That is the law, and a very just law, too. Leave anything undone, or break the command in any respect and you die; that is the law.

6. *But the righteousness which is of faith—*

This is quite another thing; it—

6. *Speaketh on this wise,*

And it is Moses who speaks here, as in the previous verse. This is what the righteousness of faith says:—

6—9. *Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*

God's way of salvation, then, is "Believe and live." Believe in Christ; Christ dying, Christ raised from the dead. If thou so believest, thou art saved. Thou needest not mount to heaven in rapture, nor dive to hell in remorse. As thou art, believe and live. This is the way of the righteousness of God.

10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

True faith must be accompanied by an open confession. Come forward, and outwardly own what you inwardly believe. Remember those words of the Lord Jesus, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Here, as there, the confession is put after the faith, as indeed it must be. First, the reality, the thing signified, faith; afterwards, the outward and visible sign in the confession of that faith.

11. *For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.*

He need never be ashamed of his faith. It will bear him up; it will bear him through; it will bear him up to heaven.

12, 13. *For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*

That is a wonderful sentence; catch at it. Doubting, troubled spirits, catch at it, believe it, practise it; and you shall find it true.

14, 15. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*

See here the whole machinery of salvation. God provides salvation in Christ Jesus, he sends the preacher to tell of it, men hear, they believe, and salvation is theirs. You have not to make a righteousness, you have to accept the one that is made for you. It is not what you shall do that shall save you; it is what Christ has done. You are to get out of self-confidence into confidence in him; and as soon as you do so, you are saved.

16. *But they have not all obeyed the gospel.*

Oh, no; all who have heard it, have not obeyed it! There are many here who have heard it from their childhood, and yet they have not obeyed it. Notice the word "obeyed", for the gospel comes to you with the force of a divine command. If you reject it, you sin against it, for it is your duty to accept it: "but they have not all obeyed the gospel."

16. *For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?*

So few were the obedient, that he asked where they were.

17, 18. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?*

Oh, may they hear, indeed!

18, 19. *Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.*

Has he not done it? Israel is rejected, and remains without Christ, while many out of "a foolish nation" of Anglo-Saxons, who were idolaters, have accepted Christ. People who were regarded as dogs by God's chosen nation Israel have come into the house of the Lord, and still Israel refuses to come.

20. *But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not;*

Hear, then, you who have never had any religion; you who seldom go to the house of God. Even you may be saved, for it is written, "I was found of them that sought me not."

20. *I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.*

Here is the manifestation of sovereign grace, God choosing and saving whom he wills, irrespective of their condition; exercising the sovereignty of his mercy in saving the most undeserving.

21. *But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands—*

In the attitude of invitation and entreaty, and readiness to receive,—

21. *Unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

And that is what he has done to thee, O thou careless child of pious parents, thou unregenerate hearer of the Word! All day long has he stood and stretched forth his hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people. The Lord forgive all such, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—485, 540, 503.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

MICAH'S MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 1ST, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 22nd, 1889.

"Walk humbly with thy God."—Micah vi. 8.

THIS is the essence of the law, the spiritual side of it; its ten commandments are an enlargement of this verse. The law is spiritual, and touches the thoughts, the intents, the emotions, the words, the actions; but specially God demands the heart. Now it is our great joy that what the law requires the gospel gives. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." In him we meet the requirements of the law, first, by what he has done for us; and next, by what he works in us. He conforms us to the law of God. He makes us, by his Spirit, not for our righteousness, but for his glory, to render to the law the obedience which we could not present of ourselves. We are weak through the flesh, but when Christ strengthens us, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Only through faith in Christ does a man learn to do righteously, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; and only by the power of the Holy Spirit sanctifying us to that end do we fulfil these three divine requirements. These we fulfil perfectly in our desire; we would be holy as God is holy, if we could live as our heart aspires to live, we would always do righteously, we would always love mercy, and we would always walk humbly with God. This the Holy Spirit daily aids us to do by working in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure; and the day will come, and we are pining for it, when, being entirely free from this hampering body, we shall serve him day and night in his temple, and shall render to him an absolutely perfect obedience, for "they are without fault before the throne of God."

To-night I shall have a task quite sufficient if I dwell only upon the third requirement, "Walk humbly with thy God," asking first, *What is the nature of this humility?* and secondly, *Wherein does this humility show itself?*

I. First, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS HUMILITY? The text is very full of teaching in that respect.

And, first, *this humility belongs to the highest form of character.* Observe what precedes our text, "to do justly, and to love mercy." Suppose a man has done that, suppose that in both these things he has come up to the divine standard, what then? Why, then he must walk humbly with God. If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, and have fellowship with him, still we shall need to walk before God very humbly, ever looking to the blood, for even then the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth and continues to cleanse us from all sin. If we have done both these things, we shall still have to say that we are unprofitable servants, and we must walk humbly with God. We have not reached that consummation yet, always doing justly, and loving mercy, though we are approximating to it by Christ's gracious help; but if we did attain to the ideal that is set before us, and every act was right towards man, and more, every act was delightfully saturated with a love to our neighbour as strong as our love to ourselves, even then there would come in this precept, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Dear friends, if ever you should think that you have reached the highest point of Christian grace,—I almost hope that you never will think so,—but suppose that you should ever think so, do not, I pray you, say anything that verges upon boasting, or exhibit any kind of spirit that looks like glorying in your own attainments; but walk humbly with your God. I do believe that the more grace a man has the more he feels his deficiency of grace. All the people that I have ever thought might have been called perfect before God, have been notable for a denial of anything of the sort; they have always disclaimed anything like perfection, they have always lain low before God, and if one has been constrained to admire them, they have blushed at his admiration. If they have thought that they were at all the objects of reverence among their fellow-Christians, I have noticed how zealously they have put that aside with self-depreciatory remarks, telling us that we did not know all, or we should not think so of them; and therein I do admire them yet more. The praise that they put from them returns to them with interest. Oh, let us be of that mind! The best of men are but men at the best, and the brightest saints are still sinners, for whom there is still a fountain open, but not opened, mark you, in Sodom and Gomorrah, but the fountain is opened for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that even they may still continue, with all their lofty privileges, to wash therein, and to be clean. This is the kind of humility, then, which is consistent with the highest moral and spiritual character, nay, it is the very clothing of such a character, as Peter puts it, "Be clothed with humility," as if, after we had put on the whole armour of God, we put this over all to cover it all up. We do not want the helmet to glitter in the sun, nor the greaves of brass upon the knees to shine before men; but clothing ourselves like officers in mufti, we conceal the beauties which will eventually the more reveal themselves.

The second remark is this, *the humility here prescribed involves constant*

communion with God. Observe that we are told to walk humbly with God. It is of no use walking humbly away from God. I have seen some people very proudly humble, very boastful of their humility. They have been so humble that they were proud enough to doubt God. They could not accept the mercy of Christ, they said; they were so humble. In truth, theirs was a devilish humility, not the humility that comes from the Spirit of God. Oh, no! This humility makes us walk with God; and, beloved, can you conceive a higher and truer humility than that which must come of walking with God? Remember what Job said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Remember how Abraham, when he communed with God, and pleaded with him for Sodom, said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes;" "dust"—that set forth the frailty of his nature, "ashes"—as if he was like the refuse of the altar, which could not be burnt up, which God would not have. He felt himself to be, by sin, like the sweeping of a furnace, the ashes, refuse of no value whatsoever; and that was not because he was away from God, but because he was near to God. You can get to be as big as you like if you get away from God; but coming near to the Lord you rightly sing,—

> "The more thy glories strike mine eyes,
> The humbler I shall lie."

Depend upon it that it is so. It might be a kind of weather-gauge as to your communion, whether you are proud or humble. If you are going up, God is going down in your esteem. "He must increase," said John the Baptist of the Lord Jesus; "but I must decrease." The two things go together; if this scale rises, that scale must go down. "Walk humbly with thy God." Dare to keep with God, dare to have him as your daily Friend, be bold enough to come to him who is within the veil, talk with him, walk with him, as a man walks with his familiar friend; but walk humbly with him. You will do so if you walk truly; I cannot conceive such a thing,—it is impossible,—as a man walking proudly with God. He takes his fellow by the arm, and feels that he is as good as his neighbour, perhaps superior to him; but he cannot walk with God in such a frame of mind as that. The finite with the Infinite! That alone suggests humility; but the sinful with the Thrice-holy! This throws us down into the dust.

But, next, *this humility implies constant activity.* "Walk humbly with thy God." Walking is an active exercise. These people had proposed to bow before God, as you notice in the sixth verse, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" But the answer is not, "Bow humbly before God," but "Walk humbly with God." Now, beloved, when we are very actively engaged, pressed with business, one thing after another coming in, if the great Master employs us in some large concern,—large, of course, only to us,—if we have work after work, we are too apt to forget that we are only servants, we are doing all the business for our Master, we are only commission agents for him. We are apt to think that we are the head of the firm; we should not think so if we did think

steadily for a moment, for we should know our right position; but in the midst of activity we get cumbered with much serving, and we are too apt to get off our proper level. We have, perhaps, to rule others; and we forget that we also are men under authority. It is easy to play the little king over the little folk; but it must not be so. You must learn, not only to be humble in the closet of communion, and to be humble with your Bible before you, but to be humble in preaching, to be humble in teaching, to be humble in ruling, to be humble in everything that you do, when you have as much as ever you can do. When from morning to night you are still pressed with this and that service, still keep your proper place. That is where Martha went wrong, you know; not in having much serving, but by getting to be mistress. She was Mrs. Martha, and the housewife is a queen; but Mary sat in the servant's place at Jesus' feet. If Martha's heart could have been where Mary's body was, then had she served aright. The Lord make us Martha-Maries, or Mary-Marthas, whenever we are busy, that we may walk humbly with God!

Next, I do not think that it is far-fetched if I say that *this humility denotes progress*. The man is to walk, and that is progress, advancing. "Walk humbly:" I am not to be so humble that I feel that I cannot do any more, or enjoy any more, or be any better; they call that humility. It begins with an S in English, and the full word is SLOTH. "I cannot be as believing, as bold, as useful as such a man is." Thou art not told to be humble and sit still, but to be humble and walk with God. Go forward, advance, not with a proud desire to excel your fellow-Christians, not even with the latent expectation of being more respected because you have more grace; but still walk, go on, advance, grow. Be enriched with all the precious things of God; be filled with all the fulness of God; walk on, walk ever. Lie not down in despair; roll not in the dust with desperation because thou thinkest high things impossible to thee; walk, but walk humbly. Thou wilt soon find out, if thou dost make any progress, that thou hast need to be humble. I believe that when a man goes back he gets proud, and I am persuaded that when a man advances he gets humbler, and that it is a part of the advance to walk more and more and more humbly. For this the Lord tries many of us, for this he visits us in the night, and chastens us, that we may be qualified to have more grace, and get to higher attainments, by being more humble, "for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." If thou wilt climb the mountain-side, thou shalt be thirsty among the barren crags; but if thou wilt descend into the valleys, where the red deer wander, and the brooks flow among the meadows, thou shalt drink to thy full. Doth not the hart pant for the water-brooks? Do thou pant for them; they flow in the valley of humiliation. The Lord bring us all there!

Next, *the humility here prescribed implies constancy:* "Walk humbly with thy God." Not sometimes be humble; but ever walk humbly with thy God. If we were always what we are sometimes, what Christians we should be! I have heard you say, I think, and I have said the same myself, "I felt very broken down, and lay very low at my Master's feet." Were you so the next day? And the day after did you continue so? Is it not very possible for us to be one day, because

of our great debt to our Master, begging that he would not be hard with us, and is it not possible to-morrow to be taking our brother by the throat? I do not say that God's people would do that; but I do feel that the spirit that is in them may lead them to think of doing it, one day acknowledging your Father's authority, and doing his will, and another day standing outside the door, and refusing to go in because the prodigal son has come home. "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; I have been a consistent believer, yet I never have any high joys; but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf. Here is a wretched sinner only just saved, and he is in an ecstacy of delight. How can this be right?" O elder son, O elder brother, walk humbly with thy Father! Always be so under any circumstances. It is all very fine to have a lot of humility packed away in a box with which to perfume your prayers, and then to come out, and to be "My lord," and some very great one in the midst of the church and in the world. This will never do. It is not said, "Bow humbly before God now and then;" but as a regular, constant thing, "Walk humbly with thy God." It is not, "Bow thy head like the bulrush under some conscious fault which thou canst not deny," but, in the brightness of thy purity, and the clearness of thy holiness, still keep thy heart in lowly reverence bowing before the throne.

Once more only, and then we will quit this part of the subject, *the humility that is here prescribed includes delightful confidence.* Do let me read the text to you, "Walk humbly with God." No, no, we must not maul the passage that way, "Walk humbly with *thy* God." Do not think that it is humility to doubt your interest in Christ; that is unbelief. Do not think that it is humility to think that he is another man's God, and not yours; "Walk humbly with *thy God.*" Know that he is your God, be sure of it, come up from the wilderness leaning upon your Beloved. Have no doubt, nor even the shadow of a doubt, that you are your Beloved's, and that he is yours. Rest not for a moment if there is any question upon this blessed subject. He gives himself to you; take him to be yours by a covenant of salt that never shall be broken; and give yourself to him, saying, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." "Walk humbly with thy God." Let not anything draw you away from that confidence; but then, in comes the humility. This is all of grace; this is all the result of divine election; therefore, be humble. You have not chosen Christ, but he has chosen you. This is all the effect of redeeming love; therefore, be humble. You are not your own, you are bought with a price, so you can have no room to glory. This is all the work of the Spirit.

> "Then give all the glory to his holy name,
> To him all the glory belongs."

"Walk humbly with thy God." I lie at his feet as one unworthy, and cry, "Whence is this to me? I am not worthy of the least of the mercies that thou hast made to pass before me." I think this is the humility prescribed in the text. May the Spirit of God work it in us!

II. And now, secondly, with great brevity upon many points, I

have to answer the question, WHEREIN DOES THIS HUMILITY SHOW ITSELF? I have what might be a long task; a Puritan would want an hour and a half more for the second part of the subject. Our Puritan forefathers preached, you know, by a glass, an hour-glass which stood by them, and sometimes, when they had let one glass run out at the end of the hour, they would say to the people, "Let us have another glass," and they turned it over again, and went on for another hour. But I am not going to do that, I do not wish to weary you, and I would rather send you away longing than loathing. Wherein, then, does this humility show itself? It ought to show itself in every act of life. I would not advise any of you to *try* to be humble, but to *be* humble. As to acting humbly, when a man forces himself to it, that is poor stuff. When a man talks a great deal about his humility, when he is very humble to everybody, he is generally a canting hypocrite. Humility must be in the heart, and then it will come out spontaneously as the outflow of life in every act that a man performs.

But now, specially, walk humbly with God *when your graces are strong and vigorous*, when there has been a very clear display of them, when you have been very patient, when you have been very bold, when you have been very prayerful, when the Scriptures have opened themselves up to you, when you have enjoyed a grand season of searching the Word, and especially when the Lord gives you success in his service, when there are more souls than usual brought to Christ, when God has made you a leader among his people, and has laid his hand upon you, and said, "Go in this thy might." Then, "Walk humbly with thy God." The devil will tell you when you have preached a good sermon; perhaps you will not have preached a good one when he tells you that you have, for he is a great liar; but you may go home wonderfully pleased with a sermon with which God is not pleased, and you may go home wonderfully humble about a sermon that God means to bless. But when there really does seem to be something that the evil one tempts you to glory in, then hear this word, "Walk humbly with thy God."

Next, *when you have a great deal of work to do*, and the Lord is calling you to it, then, before you go to it, walk humbly with God. Do you ask, How? By feeling that you are quite unfit for it, for you are unfit in yourself; and by feeling that you have no strength, for you have not any. When you are weak, by owning your weakness you will grow strong. Lean hard upon your God, cry to him in prayer. Do not open your own mouth, but from your heart pray, "Open thou my lips, and my mouth shall speak forth thy praise." Be intensely subservient to the Spirit of God, yield yourself up to be worked upon by him, that you may work upon others. Oh, there is such a difference between a sermon preached by our own power and a sermon preached in the power of the Holy Spirit! If you do not feel the difference, my brother, your people will soon find it out.

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at his feet!"

Then it is, when walking humbly with God in service, that he will fill us, and make us strong.

Next, walk humbly with God *in all your aims*. When you are

seeking after anything, mind what your motive is. Even if it be the best thing, seek it only for God. If any man, or any woman either, tries to work in the Sunday-school, or if anyone preaches in the open-air, or in the house of God, with a view of being somebody, with the idea of being thought to be a very admirable, zealous brother or sister, then let this word come into your ear, "Walk humbly with thy God." There is a word which Jeremiah spoke to Baruch which we need to have said to ourselves sometimes: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not." You young men of the College, do not be always hunting up big places; be willing to go to small places to preach the gospel to poor people. Never mind if the Lord sends you right down to the lowest slum; but go, and let your aim always be this, "I do not desire for myself anything great except the greatest thing of all, that I may glorify God." "Walk humbly with thy God." You are the kind of man who will be promoted in due time if you are willing to go down. In the true Church of Christ, the way to the top is downstairs; sink yourself into the highest place. I say not this that even in sinking you may think of the rising; think only of your Lord's glory. "Walk humbly with thy God."

Walk humbly with God, also, *in studying his Word, and in believing his truth.* We have a number of men, nowadays, who are critics of the Bible; the Bible stands bound at their bar, nay, worse than that, it lies on their table to be dissected, and they have no feeling of decency towards it; they will cut out its very heart, they will rend asunder its tenderest parts, even the precious Song of Solomon, or the beloved apostle's Gospel, or the Book of the Apocalypse, is not sacred in their eyes. They shrink from nothing, their scalpel, their knife, cuts through everything. They are the judges of what the Bible ought to be, and it is deposed from its throne. God save us from that evil spirit! I desire ever to sit at the feet of God in the Scriptures. I do not believe that, from one cover to the other, there is any mistake in it of any sort whatever, either upon natural or physical science, or upon history or anything whatever. I am prepared to believe whatever it says, and to take it believing it to be the Word of God; for if it is not all true, it is not worth one solitary penny to me. It may be to the man who is so wise that he can pick out the true from the false; but I am such a fool that I could not do that. If I do not have a guide here that is infallible, I would as soon guide myself, for I shall have to do so after all; I shall have to be correcting the blunders of my guide perpetually, but I am not qualified to do that, and so I am worse off than if I had not any guide at all. Sit thou down, Reason, and let Faith rise up. If the Lord hath said it, let God be true, and every man a liar. If science contradicts Scripture, so much the worse for science; the Scripture is true, whatever the theories of men may be. "Ah!" you say, "you are an old-fashioned fogy." Yes, I am; I will not disclaim any compliment which you choose to pass upon me; and I will stand or fall by this blessed Book. This was the mighty weapon of the Reformation; it smote the Papacy, and I shall not throw it down, whoever does. Stand thou still, my brother, and listen to the voice of the Lord, and "walk humbly with thy God" as to his truth.

Walk humbly with God, next, *as to mercies received.* You were ill a little while ago; and now you are getting well. Do not let pride come in because you feel that you can lift so many pounds. You are getting on in business; you wear a much better coat than you used to come here in; but do not begin to think yourself a mighty fine gentleman. Now you get into very good society, you say; but do not be ashamed to come to the prayer-meeting along with the Lord's poor, and to sit next to one who has not had a new coat for many a day. "Walk humbly with thy God," or else it may be that he will take thee down a notch or two, and bring thee back to thy old poverty; and then what wilt thou say to thyself for thy folly?

Next, walk humbly with God *under great trials.* When you are brought very low, do not kick against the pricks. When wave after wave comes, do not begin to complain. That is pride; murmur not, but bow low. Say, "Lord, if thou smite me, I deserve more than thou dost lay upon me. Thou hast not dealt with me according to my sin. I accept the chastisement." Let not the rebellious spirit rise when a child is taken away, or when the wife is taken from your bosom, or the husband from the head of the house. Oh, no; say, "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

And next, walk humbly with God *in thy devotions, as between thyself and God* in thy chamber. Dost thou read? Read humbly. Dost thou pray? Pray humbly. Dost thou sing? Sing joyfully, but sing humbly. Do take care, when thy God and thyself are together, and none besides, that there thou showest to him thy humble heart, with deep humility that it is no more humble than it is.

And then, next, walk humbly *as between thyself and thy brethren.* Ask not to be head choir-master; desire not to be the principal man in the church. Be lowly. The best man in the church is the man who is willing to be a doormat for all to wipe their boots on, the brother who does not mind what happens to him at all so long as God is glorified. I have heard brethren say, "Well, but you must stand up for your dignity." I lost mine a long time ago, and I never thought it was worth while to look for it. As to the dignity of the pastor, the dignity of the minister, if we have no dignity of character, the other is a piece of rag. We must try to earn our position in the Church of God by being willing to take the lowest room; and if we will do so, our brethren will take care that before long they will say to us, "Go up higher." In thy dealings with weak Christians, with feeble Christians, do not always scold. Remember that, if thou art strong now, thou mayest very soon be as weak as thy brethren are.

And *in dealing with sinners,* "walk humbly with thy God." Do not stand a long way off, as if you loved them so much that distance lent enchantment to the view. Do you not think that, sometimes, we deal with sinners as if we would like to pluck them from the burning if there was a pair of tongs handy; but we do not care to do it if our own dainty fingers would be smutted by the brands? Ah, beloved, we must come down from all lofty places, and feel a deep and tender pity towards the lost, and so walk humbly with God!

Now, I have not time to go through all this subject *as to your circumstances.* If you are poor, if you are obscure, do not be pining after

a higher place; walk humbly with your God, take what he gives you. In looking back, rejoice in all his mercy; and walk humbly at the recollection of all your stumbles. In looking forward, anticipate the future with delight, but do not be proudly imagining how great you will yet be made. "Walk humbly with thy God." In all thy thoughts of holy things, be humble; thoughts of God should lay thee low, thoughts of Christ should bring thee to his feet, thoughts of the Holy Ghost should make thee grieve for having vexed him. Thoughts of every covenant blessing should make thee wonder that such privileges ever came to thee. Thoughts of heaven should make thee marvel that thou shouldst ever be found among the seraphim. Thoughts of hell should make thee humble,—

> "For were it not for grace divine,
> That fate so dreadful had been thine."

Oh, brethren, the Lord help us to walk humbly with God! This will keep us right. True humility is thinking rightly of thyself, not meanly. When you have found out what you really are, you will be humble, for you are nothing to boast of. To be humble will make you safe. To be humble will make you happy. To be humble will make music in your heart when you go to bed. To be humble here will make you wake up in the likeness of your Master by-and-by.

The Lord bless this word, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MICAH VI.

Verse 1. *Hear ye now what the* LORD *saith;*

And yet some doubt the infallible inspiration of Scripture. I would commence every reading of the Scripture with such a word of admonition as this: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith." That is what the prophet said; but God spake by the prophet: "Hear ye now what the Lord saith."

1. *Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice.*

As men were hardened, and turned away their ears, the prophet was bidden to speak to the mountains, those mountains which had been disfigured with the shrines of idols, with altars on every high hill, or, perhaps, those higher hills that were never cultivated, and that remained untouched by the defiling hand of men. God makes an appeal to these ancient things.

2. *Hear ye, O mountains, the* LORD'S *controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the* LORD *hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.*

It was wonderful condescension on God's part that he should deign to come as a defendant before the august court of the mountains, and in the presence of the deep foundations of the earth. It is a noble conception, in poetry most excellent; in grandeur, worthy of God. He made his appeal to the ancient hills to hear his pleading while he condescended to argue and ask his people why they had rejected their God, and turned aside to idols. Then he pleaded with Israel.

3. *O my people, what have I done unto thee?*

"What but good, what but mercy, have I done unto thee?"

3. *And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*

He asks them to give any reason whatever why they had turned away from him. Beloved friends, have any of you, who are the people of God, grown cold in your love to him? Are you neglecting the service of the Most High? Are you beginning to trust in an arm of flesh? Are you seeking your pleasures in the world? Have you lost the love of your espousal, your first love to your blessed Lord? Then hear him plead with you. Be not as Israel was, but let the Lord speak to you rather than to the hills: "What have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." O Lord, we have nothing to testify against thee! We have very much to testify for thee; and we blush to think that we have not done so oftener. Oh, that we had felt more love to thee, and had borne a bolder and more consistent testimony to thy love, thy grace, thy faithfulness!

4. *For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.*

God constantly refers to Israel's coming out of Egypt; on every great occasion he begins, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." And to his people the Lord still says, "I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of slavery." Is it not so? Do we not still delight in his redeeming work, in the sprinkling of the blood of the Paschal Lamb, and in the high hand and outstretched arm with which the Lord delivered us from the bondage of our sin? Remember that thou also wast a bondman; forget not who bought thee, and with what price; remember who delivered thee, and led thee out, and with what mighty power. Remember this, and let thy cold love burn up again, and let thine indifference turn to enthusiasm. O Lord, revive thy people!

The Lord further says to his people, "I sent before thee Moses (the law-giver), Aaron (the priest), and Miriam (the prophetess);" one to teach thee, another to plead for thee, and to sacrifice for thee, and the third to sing for thee, to sing thy song of gladness at the Red Sea. God has given to his people many ministries in divers forms; and they are all concentrated in his Son, who is everything to us. Oh, by the greatness of his gifts to us, let us come back to our former love to him, and to something more than that!

5. *O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the* LORD.

Balak endeavoured to get Balaam to curse the people of God; but they could not be overcome by human power. He sought to destroy them by superhuman agency; but Balaam's curses turned to blessings. God would not permit the false prophet to curse Israel; and he has in our case turned the curse of the great adversary into a blessing. He has delivered us, and our trials have strengthened us, and taught us more of God. Will we not remember this? Shittim was the last encampment on the further side of Jordan, Gilgal the first in the promised land; therefore they are united here with God's righteousnesses to his people, for the word is in the plural. It is a remarkable idiom: "That ye may know the righteousnesses of the Lord." He is righteous always, in every way, towards everything, and under every aspect. I wish we knew this, for sometimes we begin to think that he deals harshly with us. When we are severely tried, we begin to doubt the righteousness of the Lord. Remember all that he has done to you from the first day to the last, "that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord."

Now the plaintiff takes up the case, but he, too, turns defendant, and asks what he can do to bring about a reconciliation.

6, 7. *Wherewith shall I come before the* LORD, *and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the* LORD *be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

The people will give God everything but what he wants. They begin, you see, by saying that they will bring burnt offerings; they are ready to do that. The axe shall fall upon the head of numberless young bullocks, such as God demanded under the law. The people are ready enough for that sacrifice; and as for rams, they will shed their blood by thousands. If oil is wanted for the meat offering, rivers of it shall flow. When they have offered what God would have, they offer what he would not have, what God abhorred and loathed, for they offered to give their firstborn for their transgressions. They insulted Jehovah with the sacrifices of Moloch, with human slaughter, offering their children to obtain atonement for their sins. They were willing to go even that length, and to do anything but what God wants; and men will still give to God anything but what he asks for; majestic edifices, gorgeous services, ecstatic music, gold and silver; anything but what the Lord demands. Here is God's answer:—

8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the* LORD *require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

It was a spiritual worship that the Lord required; not externals, not outward gifts, but the heart. If thou wilt bring an offering, bring thyself; there is no other gift that the Lord so much desires. The prophet mentions three things that the Lord required of his people:—

"To do justly:" here are the equities of life. "To love mercy:" here are the kindnesses of life, which are to be rendered cheerfully. The prophet does not say, "to do mercy," but to "love" it, to take a delight in it, to find great pleasure in the forgiveness of injuries, in the helping of the poor, in the cheering of the sick, in the teaching of the ignorant, in the winning back of sinners to the ways of God. "And to walk humbly with thy God." These are the things which please him; and when we are in Christ, and he becomes our righteousness, these are the sacrifices with which God is well pleased; they make an offering of a sweet smell, a holy incense which we may present before him. Talk no more of your outward ordinances, your will-worship, with abundance of music, or human eloquence and learning, and what not. These things delight not the Lord; no offering is acceptable unless the outward conduct shows that the heart is right with him.

9. *The* LORD'S *voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.*

God's voice to his people is often uttered by means of their affliction: "Hear ye the rod." He wishes us to understand that judgments and calamities are his voice crying to the city. Oh, that we were men of wisdom, that we would hear what God has to say! Alas! Israel did not hear, and Judah would not listen, even to God's own voice!

10. *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable?*

Here he comes to practical details. In Micah's day, men had grown rich by oppression, by a want of justice; they had wronged their fellow-men, and God asked them whether they expected to be pleasing to him when their houses were full of treasure which they had virtually stolen by giving scant measure and short weight. God condescends even to point out these minute particulars of moral conduct, and so should his servants do. It is not for us, his ministers, to be soaring into the clouds, to astonish you with the grandeur of our thoughts and words; but to come to your shops, to look at your bushel-measures and your pecks, your yard-sticks and your weights.

11, 12. *Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth.*

They were, I suppose, very much what Orientals are still; you cannot trade with them without having need of more than two eyes. Their price has to be beaten down; their quantities must be counted. God would not have his people like this. He says nothing about the Moabites or the Babylonians doing this, but for his people to do it was very grievous to him.

13. *Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins.*

They lied, and they cheated; so God would give them a sorry tongue, betokening their ill-health. He would make their present distress to get worse and worse, till they should be sick through their wounds.

14. *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied;*

The satisfaction that comes to us through eating is of his mercy, and when he wills, he can say, "Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied."

14. *And thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee;*

"Thou shalt feel an inward sinking; even when thou hast eaten, thou shalt be faint, as a man who has eaten nothing."

14. *And thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword.*

So that in every project they would be disappointed; in every design they would be frustrated, because God would be against them.

15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine.*

God can let men have every form of outward prosperity, and yet make nothing of it. I fear that some, perhaps some present, have every outward religious blessing; yet nothing comes of it. You hear sermons, you come to meetings, you tread the olives, but you are not anointed with the oil. The grapes are in the wine-vat; but you drink not the wine. God save us from that sad condition!

16. *For the statutes of Omri are kept,*

They would not keep the statutes of God; but they could keep the foul statutes of Omri, which appear to have been specially objectionable to God.

16. *And all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels;*

He was an arch rebel against God. Remember his murder of Naboth to get his vineyard; and these people followed his evil example.

16. *That I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.*

Very hard was it to bear that reproach, when there would be none of the comforts of the Spirit to go with it. There are some professors who bear the reproach of Christ, but will never share his crown; that is a fearful state of things. Gladly enough would we take up that reproach that we may be truly his; but if we profess to be God's people, and act inconsistently, we shall bear all the reproach, but have nothing to sustain us under it. O Lord, of thy mercy, save us from this!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—186, 704, 705.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LAMB OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 8TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, August 25th, 1889.

"Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!"—John i. 35, 36.

You all know the old, old story. The world was lost; God must punish sin; he sent his Son to take our sin upon him that he might honour the law of God, and establish God's government by being obedient to the law, and yielding himself up to the death-penalty. He whom Jehovah loves beyond all else came to earth, became a man, and, as a man, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is he who is called in our text "the Lamb of God", the one Sacrifice for man's sin. There is no putting away of sin without sacrifice; there is only one Sacrifice that can put away sin, and that is, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is divine, yet human; Son of God, yet Son of Mary. He yielded up his life, "the Just for the unjust," the Sinless for the sinful, "that he might bring us to God," and reconcile us to the great Father. That is the story, and whosoever believeth in him shall live. Any man, the world over, who will trust himself to Christ, God's great Sacrifice, shall be saved, for this is our continual witness, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

To-night I do not intend so much to preach a sermon as to urge those who have seen the Lamb of God to look at him more intently, to study him more, and especially to plead for the power of the Holy Ghost to reveal him to them. I want to entreat men, who have looked elsewhere, now to turn their eyes away from the fruitless search after peace and life, and to come and "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." May the Spirit of God open their eyes, and incline their hearts, that to-night, even to-night, they may look unto him and live!

When John saw Jesus Christ on that memorable day, he, first of all, beheld him himself, and then he said to others, "Behold the Lamb of God." "Looking upon Jesus as he walked," steadfastly beholding him, watching him, gazing with humble admiration at him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Brethren, we cannot preach what we have not practised. If these eyes have never looked to Jesus, how can I bid your eyes look at him? Beholding him, I found peace to my soul; I, who was disposed even to despair, rose from the depths of anguish to the heights of joy by looking unto him; and I therefore dare to say to you, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Oh, that each one of you might believe our testimony concerning Jesus, and look to him and live!

What did John mean by saying, "Behold the Lamb of God"? Behold, in the Latin, *ecce*, is a note of admiration, of wonderment, of exclamation. "Behold the Lamb of God!" There was nothing of greater wonder ever seen than that God himself should provide the Lamb for the burnt offering, that he should provide his only Son out of his very bosom, that he should give the delight of his heart to die for us. Well may we behold this great wonder. Angels admire and marvel at this mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh; they have never left off wondering and adoring the grace of God that gave Jesus to be the Sacrifice for guilty men. Behold and wonder, never leave off wondering; tell it as a wonder, think of it as a wonder, sing of it as a wonder; even in heaven you will not cease to wonder at this glorious Lamb of God.

I think that John also meant his disciples to consider when he said to them, "Behold the Lamb of God!" So we say to you, "Think of him, study him, know all that you can about him, look him up and down. He is God; do you understand that he stood in the sinner's stead? He is man; do you know how near akin he is to you, how sympathetic he is, a brother born for your adversity?" The person of Christ is a great marvel; how God and man can be in one person, it is impossible for us to tell. We believe what we cannot comprehend; and we rejoice in what we cannot understand. He whom God has provided to be your Saviour is both God and man; he can lay his hand upon both parties, he can touch your manhood in its weakness, and touch the Godhead in its all-sufficiency. Study Christ; the most excellent of all the sciences is the knowledge of a crucified Saviour. He is most learned in the university of heaven who knows most of Christ. He who hath known most of him still says that his love surpasseth knowledge. Behold him, then, with wonder, and behold him with thankfulness.

But when John says, "Behold the Lamb of God!" he means more than wondering or considering. "Looking" is used in Scripture for faith: "Look unto me, and be ye saved." Therefore we sing—

> "There is life for a look at the crucified One,
> There is life at this moment for thee!"

Beholding is a steady kind of looking. Believe then, in Christ with a solid, abiding confidence. Come, ye sinners, come, and trust your

Saviour, not for to-night only, but for ever. Believe that he is able and willing to save you, and trust him to do so.

"Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude."

Take your eyes off everything else, and behold the Lamb of God! You need not see anything else, nothing else is worth seeing; but behold him. See how he takes your guilt, see how he bears it, see how he sinks under it, and yet rises from it, crying, "It is finished." He gives up the ghost, he is buried, he rises again from the dead because he is accepted of God, and his redeeming work is done. Trust him, trust him, trust him. "Look and live," is now our message; not "do and live," but "live and do." If you ask how you are to live, our answer is look, trust, believe, confide, rest in Christ, and the moment you do so, you are saved.

But, once more, when John said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God!" it was a hint that they should leave off looking at John, and turn their attention wholly to Jesus, and follow him. Hence we find that John's two disciples left him, and became the disciples of Christ. Beloved, we who preach long to have your attention, but when you give your attention to us, our longing then is to pass it on to Christ our Lord. Look on him, and follow him, not us. What can we do, poor creatures that we are? Look unto him, mark his footsteps, tread in them. Do as he bids you, take him for your Lord, become his disciples, his servants. Behold the Lamb of God, and always behold him. Look to him, look up to him, and follow where he leads the way.

Thus I have put the text before you pretty simply. Now, I want to talk to you a little about beholding this Lamb of God, taking a hasty run through various Scripture references to the lamb; and I will ask you, first, to *Behold the Lamb of God in his connections with men*, and secondly, to *Behold the Lamb of God in his benedictions to men*.

I. Let us, first, BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS CONNECTIONS WITH MEN.

How was the Lamb of God first seen in the world? It was the case of *the lamb for one man*, brought by one man for himself, and on his own behalf. You all know that I refer to Abel, who was a shepherd, and brought of the firstlings of his flock, that is, a lamb, and he brought this lamb for himself, and on his own account, that he might be accepted of God, and that he might present to God an offering well-pleasing in his sight. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground as an offering to God. I think that there was a difference in the sacrifice, as well as in the man bringing it, for the Holy Ghost says little about the difference of the man, but he says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," and he was accepted because he brought a more excellent sacrifice. The one sacrifice was bloodless, the fruit of the ground, the other was typical of Christ, the Lamb of God, and was therefore accepted: "and the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering."

Now, beloved, our first view of Christ usually is here, to know him for ourselves. I am a sinner, and I want to have communion with my God; how shall I obtain it? I am guilty, I am sinful; how shall

I draw near to the holy God? Here is the answer. Take the Lord Jesus Christ to be yours by faith, and bring him to God; you must be accepted if you bring Christ with you. The Father never repelled the Son, nor one who was clothed with the Son's righteousness, or who pleaded the Son's merit. Come you, as Abel came, not with fruits of your own growing, but with the sacrifice of blood, with Christ the holy Victim, the spotless Lamb of God, and so coming, whoever you may be, you shall be acceptable before God by faith. Now, behold him, each one of you for yourself!

I know what someone will say, "I hope to do that by-and-by." I hope you do not so deceive yourself. I have heard that there was once a great meeting in the den of the arch-enemy, and he was stirring up his myrmidons to seek the destruction of men. One of them said, "I have gone forth, and I have told men that there is no God, and no hereafter, and no difference between sin and righteousness, and that they may live as they like;" and there was considerable approbation among the evil spirits. But Satan himself said, "Thou hast done small service, for man has a conscience, and his conscience teaches him better; he knows that there is a God, he knows that there is a difference between sin and righteousness, he knows that there must be future punishment; you have done but little." Then another stood up, and said, "I have done better, I think, most mighty chieftain, for I have told them that the Bible is a worn-out book, that it was a fable at the first, and that they need not believe it." There was a round of cheers, for they said that he had done splendid service for the cause of darkness; but Satan said, "It is in vain that you meddle with the old Book, it has taken care of itself, and it can still do so. There is no shaking it, it is like a rock. Thou hast done service for a time, but it will soon pass away." And scarcely did anyone of the fallen spirits venture to bring forward his boasting in the presence of the terrible master who sat in the midst of them; but, at last, one said, "I have told men that they have souls, and that there is a God, and that the Bible is true. I have left them to believe as they will, but I have whispered in their ear that there is plenty of time to consider all this." Then there was a hush, and the great master of demons said, "Thou hast done best of all. This is my great net in which I take more souls than with any other, this net of procrastination or delay." Therefore say I to you, my hearers, disappoint the fiend. Fly to Jesus. Fly to Jesus at once. Behold, not to-morrow, but to-night, behold the Lamb of God, each man for himself.

Now turn over the pages of this grand old Book, and you will find the Lamb next in another connection. Israel was in Egypt, and there they had *the lamb for the family;* "In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house." Oh, I wish that you would all go on to behold the Lamb of God for your households! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Why do you stop before you finish the verse? What said the apostle to the trembling jailor? Not merely all that I have quoted, but more: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, *and thy house.*" Are there not many believers who do not believe for their house? Come,

now, and believe in this provision of the Lamb for the house. Trust the grace of God for that little girl, the last born, and for that boy who is still at school, who does not think much of these things as yet; and for that son of yours who has left home, and gone out as an apprentice. Oh, that the Lamb of God might be for him! Pray for him, to-night; and you older parents, pray for your sons who are married, and your daughters who have taken to themselves husbands, and are away from you. The Lamb is for the house, pray for the whole household to-night; take in your grandchildren, all you old folks, all of them who are in your house. Pray that the Lamb may be for the house. I do bless God that I can look upon all my household, and rejoice that they are converted to Christ. My father has this joy, too; and my grandfather also had that joy. Oh, it is a great bliss to have families, generation after generation, all brought to Christ without exception! Why should it not be so? Let us cry for it; surely we may expect the same blessing that God gave to his chosen people under the law, and expect it more largely. Grace does not run in the blood, but grace often runs side by side with it, so that Abraham is loved, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph, and Ephraim, and Manasseh. Thus the covenant blessing goes on from one to another. Plead with God, to-night, that all in your house may be beneath the sprinkled blood of the Lamb, and be saved from the destroying angel, and that all with you may go out of Egypt to have a possession in the land of the promise.

A little further on, following the Scripture, and asking you still to behold the Lamb, in the twenty-ninth chapter of that famous Book of Exodus, at the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses, we come across God's command for *the lamb for the people:* "Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even." Here is the lamb for all the chosen people, the lamb for Israel. It began with the unit, it went on to the family; and here the Lord, who "loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," makes his tabernacle to be the central place where a lamb shall be offered for the whole nation. Think of it with delight, to-night, that Christ died for all his chosen people. He hath redeemed them from among men. Though they be as many as the stars for number, or as the sand on the sea-shore innumerable, yet that one Sacrifice has redeemed them all. Glory be to God for the blood of the Lamb, by which the whole of Christ's people are redeemed!

Then let your mind take wing right out of the Old Testament into the New, for I have not time to trace all the successive steps. Come now to John, saying, in the twenty-ninth verse of this chapter, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Now you have gone beyond the bounds of Israel, and have come to *the Lamb for the world.* You have come to the Lamb of God, who dies for Gentiles as well as for Jews, for men in the isles of the sea, for men in the wilds of Africa, for men of every colour, and every race, and every time, and every clime. Oh, glory be to God, wherever there are men, we may go and tell them of Christ! Wherever there

are men born of Adam's race, we may tell them of the second Adam, to whom looking, they who look shall live, and in him they shall find eternal life. I love to think of the breaking down of the bounds that shut in the flow of grace to one nation. Behold, it flows over all Asia Minor, at first, and then over all Greece, and then to Rome, and Paul talks of going to Spain, and the gospel is borne across the sea to England, and from this country it has gone out unto the utmost ends of the earth.

Well now, take your flight, if you can get beyond that, away to heaven itself, and there you will see *the Lamb for all heaven*. Look at the Revelation, the seventh chapter, and the fourteenth verse; no, you need not look it out, for you know it. All the saints in heaven are standing in their glittering ranks, white-robed, pure as the driven snow. They sing and praise one glorious name; when one of the elders first asked the question, "What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?" he himself gave the answer, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

> "Round the altar priests confess,
> If their robes are white as snow,
> 'Twas the Saviour's righteousness,
> And his blood that made them so."

The blood of the Lamb has whitened all the saints who are in heaven; they sing of him who loved them, and laved them from their sins in his own blood. I have often wondered why that second word was not brought into our translation, for it so beautifully fits the language of the beloved apostle John: "Unto him that loved us, and laved us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." There is no whiteness in heaven but what the Lamb has wrought, no brightness there but what the Lamb has bought; everything there shows the wondrous power and surpassing merit of the Lamb of God.

If it be possible to think of something more glorious than I have already described, I think you will find it in the fifth chapter of the Revelation, at the thirteenth verse: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The day shall come when, from every place that God has made, there shall be heard the voice of praise unto the Lamb; there shall be found everywhere men and women redeemed by blood, angels and glorious spirits, rejoicing to adore him who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty Lamb of God.

I think I have given you something to consider if you turn over the pages of Scripture, and follow the track of the bleeding Lamb.

II. But now, taking you again over the same road a little, I want you, in the second place, to BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD IN HIS BENEDICTIONS TO MEN.

The first blessing of all is that of Abel. *He was accepted of God;* he offered a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain. Well now, let anybody here, who does not know it, try to learn this lesson to-night. You can only be "accepted in the Beloved." God loves his Son with such an overflowing love that he has love enough for you, love enough for me, if we are in Christ Jesus. He is the great conduit or channel of God's love, and that love flows through all the pipes to every soul that believes in Jesus. Hide behind your Lord, and you are safe. Trust his name, living and dying, and nothing can harm you. How many dear hearts, when passing through the valley of death-shade, when grim thoughts have clustered about them, have been cheered and comforted by the thought of Christ! Remember the monk who, as he died, put away the priest, and the crucifix, and everything else, and cried, "*Tua vulnera, Jesu! Tua vulnera, Jesu!*" "Thy wounds, Jesus! Thy wounds, Jesus!" I am not saved by what I can do, but by what he has done; not by what I have suffered, but by what he has endured. There hangs our everlasting hope; we trust to Christ in life and in death, and we are accepted for his sake. Come, every sinner, bring the Lamb of God; put him on the altar, and you shall be accepted at once, and you may at once begin to praise the name of the Lord.

But then, as we go on, we find this Lamb of God useful, not only for acceptance, but also for *rescue and deliverance.* It is a dark and dreadful night; Egypt shivers, and stands aghast; and just at twelve at night forth flies an angel, armed with the sword of death. In every house of Egypt there is heard a wail, for the firstborn is dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the woman who turns the mill to grind the daily corn. Death is in every house; nay, stay; there are houses wherein there is no death. What has secured those habitations? The father took a lamb, shed its blood, dipped the bunch of hyssop in it, and smeared the lintel and the two side posts; and then all sat down and feasted on the lamb undisturbed, and calm, and happy. They rejoiced to have for food that lamb whose blood was the ensign of their safety. There was no crying there, no dying there; death could not touch the inhabitants of the house that was marked with the blood of the paschal lamb. Beloved, you and I are perfectly safe if we are sheltered beneath the blood of the Lamb of God; nothing can harm us, everything must bless us; and we may go to our beds to-night singing—

> "Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,
> I lay me down to rest,
> As in the embraces of my God,
> Or on my Saviour's breast."

We may rise to-morrow morning, if we are spared, and go into this busy world without any fear. The broad arrow of the King is set upon us in the blood-mark of the atoning sacrifice, and we are safe, and safe for ever. Glory be to the name of the Lord for this!

Nor was that all. As I have told you, the blood of the paschal lamb was not only sprinkled for the protection of the house, but its flesh was the *food* of the inmates. Oh, brethren, we do not at first

know what it is to feed on Christ! We are satisfied to be sprinkled with his blood; but the believer afterwards finds that Christ is the food of his soul. His blood is drink indeed, and his flesh is meat indeed. Oh, what a festival have we kept over the person of our Lord! Sometimes, when faint and hungry, we have begun to think of the Incarnate God, the bleeding Lamb, the full atonement paid, and we have said, "My soul is full, satisfied with favour, full of the blessing of the Lord." I do not know what there is in the gospel if you take away the atoning sacrifice; it seems to me that there would be nothing left but chaff, which might suit asses and horses, but would not be fit for men. Look to Jesus Christ dying in our stead, and here is something for the soul to feed upon, ay, and to be satisfied with, as with marrow and fatness!

I pointed you, a little further on, to the lamb in the wilderness, the lamb offered up every day; that brings us to another point in our Lord's work. We have had Christ for acceptance, Christ for safety, and Christ for food, now we have Christ for *perpetual resort*. The Lamb of God in the morning! Oh, blessed be God for a Saviour in the morning! If the night has gathered aught of evil, he doth then disperse it, as the sun dispels the darkness. But oh, what a precious thing also to have the Lamb of God in the evening! If in the day we have soiled our feet in traversing this busy world, here we come to the fountain, and we are made clean through the blood of the Lamb. Perpetual merit, perpetual intercession, perpetual life-giving, perpetual salvation, flow from Jesus Christ the Lamb of God. He is not slain twice; his one wonderful offering has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; but its efficacy continues as though he were sacrificed often, ever supplying us with merit, so that, in effect, his wounds continually do bleed. He is always a new Saviour for me every morning, always a new Saviour every night, and yet always the same Saviour, the same Christ. There is no getting weary of him, there is nothing "stale" in him. They may talk about "a new view of the atonement." I have no view of the atonement but this, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me;" "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree;" and that old view of the atonement is ever fresh and ever new to the heart and conscience.

Well now, beloved, when we come to John again, following our former run of thought, we find the Lamb of God useful for *guidance*, for when John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," the two disciples followed Jesus; and we read of some, "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." The Lamb is our Guide. The Lord is a Shepherd as well as a Lamb, and the flock following in his footsteps is safely led. My soul, when thou wantest to know which way to go, behold the Lamb of God! Ask, "What would Jesus do?" Then do thou what Jesus would have done in such a case, and thou canst not do amiss.

Further on we find such a passage as this, telling us of *victory* through the Lamb of God: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." The Lamb is a great Warrior; there is none like him. Is he not the Lion of the tribe of Judah? Though he be gentle as a lamb, yet against sin and iniquity he is fiercer than a young lion

when it roareth on its prey. If we follow him, hold fast his truth, believe in his atonement, and perpetually proclaim his gospel, we shall overcome all error, and all sin, and all evil.

Well now, this blessed Lamb—it is not easy to leave off talking about him when one once begins—is so blessed that you may well behold him, for all *happiness* comes through him. In heaven you will see nothing without him. "Nothing," say you? No, nothing; here is a proof of my words. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." All the light, the knowledge, the joy, the bliss of heaven, come through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. Not Jesus only, but Jesus slain, Jesus the Lamb of God, is the very light of heaven.

And what, think you, is the joy-day of heaven, the time for the highest *exultation*? Why, the joyous day when all the golden bells shall peal out their glorious melodies, and all the silver trumpets shall ring out their jubilant notes, will be the day of the marriage of the Lamb. It is the heaven of heaven, the climax of ineffable delight; and the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, sings, "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." So that, at the topmost round of the ladder of eternal bliss, there do you find the Lamb. You cannot get beyond him. He gives you all he has, even himself. Behold him, then, and go on beholding him throughout the countless ages of eternity.

I would to God that you had all beheld him, and I pray you to behold him to-night. It is but a little while, and the death-film will gather about your eyes; and if you have not seen the Lamb while yet you have mortal eyes, you will see him, you will certainly see him, but your vision will be like that of Balaam, "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh." If it is with you "not now", it may be "not nigh." It will be an awful thing to see the Lamb with a gulf between yourself and him, for there is a great, impassable gulf fixed in the next world; and when you see him across that gulf, how will you feel? Then shall you cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb!" Jesus will still be a Lamb, even to the lost; it is "the wrath of the Lamb" that they will dread. The Lamb is always conspicuous; he may be neglected, rejected, refused to-night, but he will be beheld in eternity, and beheld to your everlasting confusion and unutterable dismay if you refuse to behold him now. Let it not be so with any of you.

"Ye sinners, seek his face,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN I. 1—37.

John is the majestic Evangelist; he is the high-soaring eagle with the piercing eye. His is the Gospel of the Son of God.

Verses 1—3. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.*

We cannot describe the Deity of Christ in clearer language than John uses. He was with God; he was God; he did the works of God, for he was the Creator. If any doubt his Deity, they must do so in distinct defiance of the language of Holy Scripture.

4, 5. *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*

Christ is still not understood, Jesus is still not known. How should darkness understand light? It opposes light, it has to flee before light, but it does not, it cannot understand light. O God, work a miracle in our dark hearts, and fill them with the light of Christ!

6, 7. *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.*

That is our business, too. We who are ministers sent from God bear witness of the Light, that all men through him may believe. Oh, how often we go home, and cry, "Who hath believed our report?" We do not ask you to believe in us; no, but in our Master, whose heralds we are. If we can lead you to faith in him, we shall be glad indeed; but, if not, we will sorrow because we have missed our mark, and failed in our purpose.

8, 9. *He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*

If any man has saving light, true light, he gets it through Christ. There is no other light; all other light is but darkness visible. The light in which we see God comes from Jesus.

10. *He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.*

Strange was it that the Creator came to his own earth, and yet he was unknown. Men mistook him, they hated him, they crucified him whom they ought to have entertained with sacred hospitality, and worshipped with holy loyalty.

11, 12. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

All men are not the sons of God; the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood is utterly untrue. They only become the sons of God who receive Christ, and believe on his name; else are they heirs of wrath, even as others: "To them gave he power to become the sons of God."

13. *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

There is another birth beside the natural one; never does the birth of the flesh make us Christians. If our ancestry should be a line of saints, yet are we born sinners; we must be born again if we are to become saints. If we could trace our pedigree to a perfect man, if such there be, yet the birth by

the flesh would not avail us. Sons of God are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

14. *And the Word was made flesh,*

Here was the incarnation of him who made all things. He that is God "was made flesh."

14. *And dwelt among us, (and we—*

The apostles—

14. *Beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

Oh, all ye who would know Christ, learn that he is worth the knowing! He is full of grace for your sinnership, and full of truth for your ignorance. He can cleanse and he can teach; there is everything in him that you need. You shall not be deceived, for he is full of truth; you shall not be rejected, for he is full of grace.

15—18. *John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time;*

He is too high, too spiritual, to be perceived by human senses.

18. *The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.*

What of God we need to know, we may see in Christ; enough to save us, enough to sanctify us, enough to make us all like the only-begotten Son of the Father.

19, 20. *And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

With indignation he must have repelled the idea that he was the Messiah: "I am not the Christ."

21—23. *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice—*

Humbly he reduces himself to a voice; but he was not "a voice and nothing more." There was much that was mighty and wise in that voice.

23—27. *Of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

How John hides himself behind his Master! He was a most worthy man, a truly great man; but he counted himself unworthy of the most menial service for Christ, and felt honoured by filling the office of a slave to unloose his Master's shoe's latchet. It is better to be the slave of Christ than to rule vast empires; he who truly serveth him is glorified thereby.

28, 29. *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*

Now is he bringing out his message; now is he pointing out his Master.

30, 31. *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not:*

John knew Jesus very well; but he did not know him as the Sent One of God, the Messiah, till after he had received the sign and token at his baptism: "I knew him not."

31—34. *But that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.*

Jesus and John must have been well acquainted with one another; they were closely related, but John was not to know anybody as the Messiah till he received the token from God. When he saw that token, then he officially knew, and he bore instant witness: "This is the Son of God."

35, 36. *Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked,*

With holy reverence, with loving awe, gazing upon this extraordinary Person "as he walked",—

36, 37. *He saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.*

This is our one business to-night, to cry, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—278, 381, 546.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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WITNESSING BETTER THAN KNOWING THE FUTURE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 15TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, August 29th, 1889.

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."—Acts i. 6—8.

THESE are among the last words of our Lord. We greatly prize the last words of good men. Let us set high store by these later words of our ascending Lord. It is very curious to my mind that Jesus should make mention of John the Baptist and of John's baptism in these last words. Read the fifth verse: "John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." It is very usual for good men's memories, in their last hours, to go back to their first hours. I trust that some of us will think of our baptism even when we are dying.

"High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
That vow renew'd shall daily hear:
Till in life's latest hour I bow,
And bless in death a bond so dear."

Our Lord began in such a way that he could afford to look back on his beginning. Some do not commence so; their beginning is so undecided, so imperfect, so hesitating, that they may well wish to have it forgotten. But our Lord, at the close of his sojourn on earth, thinks of John the Baptist, and pays him a dying word of respect just before he is taken up into glory. I like to notice that interesting fact.

But, now, to come more to the text, a question was put to our Lord. Many questions were asked of him by his disciples, some of them not very wise ones. We are very glad that they asked them, for they have extracted from the Saviour a great amount of instruction; and although this question about restoring the kingdom to Israel may

have been a mistaken one, and they may have meant a more material and carnal kingdom than our Saviour intended to establish (of that I am not sure), yet the question brought to us a reply which we may well store up in our memories and hearts: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We have three things to talk about to-night; first, *some things which are not for us;* secondly, *some things for us to receive;* and thirdly, *something for us to be.*

I. First, then, let us consider SOME THINGS WHICH ARE NOT FOR US. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons, and to be able to make a map of the future. There are some great events of the future very clearly revealed. The prophecy is not at all indistinct about the facts that will occur; but as to when they will occur, we have no data. Some think that they have; but our Lord here seems to say that we do not know the times and the seasons, and that it is not for us to know them. I pass no censure upon brethren who think that, by elaborate calculations, they find out what is to be in the future; I say that I pass no censure, but time has passed censure of the strongest kind upon all their predecessors. I forget how many miles of books interpreting prophecy there are in the British Museum; but I believe it amounts to miles, all of which have been disproved by the lapse of time. Some of the writers were wonderfully definite; they knew within half-an-hour when the Lord would come. Some of them were very distinct about all the events; they had mapped them all within a few years. The men who wrote the books, happily for themselves, had mostly died before the time appointed came. It is always wise to pitch on a long period of prophecy, that you may be out of the way if the thing does not come off; and they mostly did so. There were very few of them who lived to suffer the disappointment which would certainly have .come to them through having fixed the wrong date. I let time censure their mistake. God forgave it, for they did it with a desire for his glory. The bulk of them were most sincere students of the Word, and herein are a lesson to us, even though they were mistaken in their calculations; but, beloved, it is not for you to know the times and the seasons.

First, *it is not proper for you.* It is not your work. You are not sent into the world to be prophets; you are sent into the world to be witnesses. You do not come here to be prognosticators of the events of to-morrow about yourself, or about your children, or about your friends, or about the nations of the earth. A veil hangs between you and the future. Your prayer is to be, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." You are told to look for the coming of your Lord, and to stand in perpetual expectation of his return; but to know the time when he will come, is no part of your office. You are servants who are to look for your Lord, who may come at cock-crowing, or at midday, or at midnight. Keep you always on the tiptoe of expectation. It would be wrong for you to profess that

you need not watch until such and such a time, for he would not come until such a date arrived.

As it is not proper for you, so *it is not profitable for you.* What would you be the better if you could make a map of all that is yet to be? Suppose it were revealed to you to-night, by an angel, in what respect would it alter your conduct for to-morrow? In what way would it help you to perform the duties which your Master has enjoined upon you? I believe that it would be to you a very dangerous gift; you would be tempted to set yourself up as an interpreter of the future. If men believed in you, you would become eminent and notable, and you would be looked upon with awe. The temptation would be to become a prophet on your own account, to head a new sect, to lead a new company of men to believe in yourself. I say that that would be the temptation. For my part, I would rather not know any more than my Lord pleases to reveal to me; and if he did reveal all the future to me, I should feel like the prophets who spake of "the burden of the Lord." Neither would it ensure your salvation to be able to foretell the future, for Balaam was a great prophet, but he was a great sinner; he was an arch-rebel although he was an arch-divine. Nor do I know that, by foretelling the future, you would convince your fellow-men; for Noah told them that the world would be destroyed by the flood, he could give them a very accurate account of the time when the rain would descend, and yet they were not converted by his preaching, neither did they come into the ark. Those truths which God has revealed, you must accept for yourselves and proclaim to others; they are profitable for all purposes, and sufficient for your work; but the future is known only to God.

And as it is not proper or profitable, so *it is not possible for you* to know the times and the seasons. You may study as you will, and pray as you please; but the times and the seasons are not committed to you. Our Lord, as man, spoke of one great event of which he did not know the time: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He does not say that now that he has risen from the dead, but he seems to hint that he did not know so as to tell his disciples; he must keep secret, even from them, that "which the Father hath put in his own power."

Notice, next, dear friends, that *it is not good for you* to know the times and the seasons. That is what the Saviour means when he says, "It is not for you to know." For, first, it would distract your attention from the great things of which you have to think. It is enough for your mind to dwell upon the cross and the coming glory of your Lord. Keep these two things distinctly before you, and you need not puzzle your brains about the future. If you did know that something important was going to happen very speedily, you might be full of consternation, and do your work in a great hurry. You might be worked up into a frenzy that would spoil all your service. Or, if there was a long time to elapse before the great event, you might feel the indifference of distance. If our Lord were not to come for another hundred years, —and he may not, we cannot tell,—then we might say, "My Lord delayeth his coming," and so we might begin to sleep, or to play

the wanton. It is for our good to stand ever in this condition, knowing that he is coming, knowing that he will reign, knowing that certain great events will certainly transpire; but not knowing the exact times and seasons when those events are to be expected.

But there is something better than knowing the times or the seasons; *it is good for us to know that they are in the Father's power:* "which the Father hath put in his own power." The events will come to pass, then, in due time. The future is all in God's hand. No prophecy will lack its mate. No word of God will fall unfulfilled to the ground. Possess your souls in patience: the things that are foretold are sure to happen. "Though the vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." I am persuaded that God never is before his time, but he never is too late. He never failed to keep tryst with his people to the tick of the clock. The future is in the Father's power.

And especially let it be remembered that it is in his power as our Father. He must arrange it rightly; he must arrange it in infinite love to us. It cannot be that, in some dark hour yet to come, he will forget us. He is our Father; will he forget his children? If the times could be in my hand, how earnestly would I pray that Christ would take them into his hand, or that the Father would take away from me the dangerous power, and wield it all himself! Did we not sing just now,—

> "All my times are in thy hand,
> All events at thy command"?

The time of birth, the time of the new birth, the time of a sore trial, the time of the death of your beloved one, the time of your sickness, and how long it shall last, all these times must come, and last, and end, as shall please your Father. It is for you to know that your Father is at the helm of the ship, and therefore it cannot be wrecked. It may rock and reel to and fro; but, since he rules the waves, the vessel will not have one more tossing than his infinite love permits. Let us, then, not seek to unroll the map of the future, but calmly say,—

> "My God, I would not long to see
> My fate with curious eyes,
> What gloomy lines are writ for me,
> Or what bright scenes arise;"

but just leave it all with God. The Father hath it in his own hands, and there we wish it to be.

So much concerning some things which are not for us.

II. And now, secondly, there are SOME THINGS FOR US TO RECEIVE. The Saviour said to the eleven that they were to wait at Jerusalem till they had received power by the Holy Ghost coming upon them. This is what we want; we want the Holy Ghost. We often speak about this; but, in truth, it is unspeakable, the power of the Holy Ghost, mysterious, divine. When it comes upon a man, he is bathed in the very essence of the Deity. The atmosphere about him becomes the life and power of God. There is an old proverb that knowledge is power; Christ has taken away the knowledge that is not power. He said, "It is not for you, child; it is not for you." But he gives you

the knowledge that is power; or, rather, that power which is better than all knowledge, the power of the Holy Spirit. Gotthold, in his parables, speaks of his little child who wanted to come into his room; but he was doing something there which he did not wish the child to see, and so he went on with his work, when, to his horror and surprise, he found that his child had in some way climbed up outside the window, and was standing on the sill trying to look in to see what his father was doing, hazarding his life in the attempt. You may guess that it was not long before that child was taken down with a pat, and something more, to teach him not to pry into his father's secrets. It is so with some of us; we need just a little pat, and perhaps more than that, to keep us from looking into things that do not belong to us. We may be comforted even if we do not know the times and the seasons, for we may get something vastly better, namely, the Holy Spirit to give us real power for our life-work.

The Holy Spirit gives to his people power which may be looked at from different points. He gave to some of them in the olden times *miraculous power*, and they went forth, having received the Spirit of God, to do great signs and wonders in the name of Christ. If you have not that, you may hope to have *mental power*. The Holy Spirit does not educate us, or give us culture after the common method of men, and yet there is an inner education and a higher culture which is much more to be desired, which comes from him. He leads us into all truth; he makes us feel the force of truth; he gives us a grip of truth; he writes truth upon the heart; he applies it to the understanding. Many a man has become quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, who was very slow of understanding in other respects. The Holy Spirit takes the fool, and makes him know the wonders of redeeming love. It is amazing how persons, of very scanty gifts, and very small attainments, have, nevertheless, become wise toward God, their mental faculties being quickened with regard to heavenly things in a very remarkable manner.

The power of the Spirit is also, in part, *moral power*. He gives to men qualities that make them strong and influential over their fellow-men, he imparts dauntless courage, calm confidence, intense affection, burning zeal, deep patience, much-enduring perseverance. Many other hallowed influences besides these are graces of the Spirit of God, which form in men a moral power exceedingly useful and exceedingly forcible. I have known men who have been slow of speech, and who have exhibited very few gifts, who have, nevertheless, been very strong men in our assemblies, true pillars of the church, for piety is power, and grace is power.

Besides that, there is a more secret, subtle power still, *spiritual power*, wherein, in the spiritual world, a man is made a prince with God, and hath power with God; and learning how to prevail with God for men, he catches the art of prevailing with men for God. He is first a wrestler alone by Jabbok; then he becomes a wrestler in the midst of the host of sinners, conquering them for Christ, taking them captive in the name of the Most High. Power in prayer is the highest form of power; and communion with God is power; and holiness, above all things, is a great power among the sons of men.

This spiritual power makes a man influential, in a sense very different from that in which the world uses the word "influential"—a disgraceful use of the word. We want men who have influence in the divinest sense, men who, somehow or other, cast a spell over their fellow-men. In their presence men cannot do what they are accustomed to do elsewhere; when these men are in any company, they check sin without a word, they incite to righteousness almost without a sentence. They carry everything before them, not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord who dwells in them. Have I not seen some, decrepit and bedridden, yet ruling a house, and influencing a parish? Have I not seen some tottering old woman who, nevertheless, has been a very queen in the circle in which she moved? Have I not seen some poor, humble rustic from the plough who, nevertheless, has worn a coronet in the midst of his fellow-men by the holiness of his life, and the spiritual power that God the Holy Ghost had imparted to him?

Now, beloved, I have not time fully to describe this endowment; I have only mentioned one or two points in which it is seen, but this endowment is what we need before we can do anything for Christ. Do you always think enough of this? The teacher prepares her lesson; but does she also prepare herself by seeking the power of the Holy Spirit? The minister studies his text; but does he ask for a baptism of the Holy Ghost? I am afraid that this spiritual qualification, the most essential of all, is frequently overlooked. Then, the Lord have mercy upon us! The soldier had better go to battle without sword or rifle, the artilleryman had better wheel up his gun without powder or shot, than that we should attempt to win a soul until first of all the Holy Spirit has given us power. Power must go with the word that is preached or taught if any large result is to follow; and that power must first be in the man who speaks that word.

For this power the disciples were to wait. The world was dying, hell was raging, yet they must tarry at Jerusalem till they had that power. Impetuous Peter must hold his tongue, and loving John must be quiet and must commune in secret with his Master. None of them must go out into the street or stand in the temple to proclaim the words of this life. They must stop till God should see fit to pour out his Spirit upon them; and I would to God that sometimes we could be quiet, too. It were better to be dumb than to speak only in the power of our own spirit. It were better to lay the finger on the lip than to begin to talk before our message has been burnt into us by the Holy Ghost. Wait for the live coal from off the altar to blister thy lip, for then only canst thou speak with power when thou thyself hast felt the fire of the Spirit.

III. Now we pass on to the third point, which is a very important practical one, SOMETHING FOR US TO BE. If you are a disciple of Christ, you are not to look into the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power; you are to receive the Spirit of God, and then there is something for you to be. Did you expect me to say that then there is *something for you to do?* Well, there is a great deal for you to do; but the text says, "Ye shall be witnesses"; not "Ye shall act as witnesses" only, but "Ye *shall be* witnesses."

Every true Christian should, in his own proper person, be a witness for his Lord. "Here I stand," says he, "myself a proof of what my Lord can do. I, his servant, saved by him, and renewed by him, washed in his blood, it is I who, while I live, whether I speak or not, am a monument of his love, a trophy of his grace." "Ye shall be witnesses unto me."

Dear friends, we are to be *witnesses of what Christ has done.* If we have seen Christ, if we believe in Christ, let us tell it honestly. These apostles had a great deal to tell. They had been with Christ in private; they had seen his miracles; they had heard his choicest and more secret words; they had to go and bear witness to it all. And you, who have been let into the secrets of Christ, you who have communed with him more closely than others, you have much to tell. Tell it all, for whatever he has said to you in the closet you are to proclaim upon the housetop. You are to witness what you have seen, and tasted, and handled, concerning your Lord.

You are to *witness to what he has revealed*, to make known to others the doctrine that he preached, or taught by his apostles. Mind that you do not tell any other. You are not sent to be "an original thinker", to make up a gospel as you go along; you are a witness, that is all, a retailer of Christ's truth, and you miss the end of your life unless you perpetually witness, and witness, and witness to what you know of him, and to what you have learnt from him. Let this be your prayer and your resolve,—

> "Give me thy strength, O God of power!
> Then let winds blow, or thunders roar,
> Thy faithful witness will I be:
> 'Tis fixed: I can do all through thee."

You are to *witness to what you have experienced concerning Christ.* Now, what is that? I will just run over this witness, feeling that there are many hundreds of dear friends here to-night who could bear the same testimony, and who will do so as they have opportunity.

First, I beg to say to all present here, to-night, that the Lord Jesus Christ can remove despair, and every form of spiritual distress. He did so to me. I was full of darkness, the shadow of death was upon me, and I found no comfort till I heard that blessed text, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." I looked unto him, and was lightened, and my face was not ashamed; and I am here to-night to bear witness that a load was thus taken from me, which I could not get rid of in any other way, and my midnight was, in a single moment, turned into the blaze of midday. Neither have I ever gone back to that darkness, nor have I again had reason to cry, "Woe is me that ever I was born." Nay, there is in the name of Jesus a balm for every mental wound, a relief for all the agony of a tortured spirit. I am sure of it; I am not saying to you what I have merely heard from other people, but what I have myself felt, and there are many here who can endorse my testimony that there is no relief to a sinner's aching heart like that which Jesus brings. I wish that you would all prove this truth for yourselves; but, at any rate, we are witnesses that it is so.

And, next, our Lord Jesus is a great transformer of character. I do not like to speak of myself, but I will speak of many a man whom I know. He came into this Tabernacle a drunkard, a swearer, a lover of unholy pleasures, and while the Word was preached, the Lord broke him down, and melted his heart. Now he hates what once he loved; and as to those pursuits which were once distasteful to him, so that he cursed and swore at the very mention of them, or at least poured ridicule upon others who loved them, he now loves them himself, and it is a wonder to himself to find himself where he now is. He never dreamt of being what he is. Ask his wife whether there is a change in him; ask his little children whether there is a change in him; ask his workmates, ask his employer, ask anybody, and they will all say, "He is not the same man." The Lord Jesus Christ has turned everything upside down with him. It was the wrong way up before, and so he has put it all right. He can turn the lion into a lamb, the raven into a dove; and he has done so to many of our friends who are sitting in this house to-night, as they would willingly bear witness. Oh, if there are any here, to-night, who would learn the way of righteousness, and quit the paths of sin, let them believe my testimony, which comes not out of feigned lips! "I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not." The Lord is able to transform character in a very wonderful way; he has done it for many of us, and if thou believest in him, he will do it for thee also.

Next, we should like to bear witness to the sustaining power of Christ under temptation. After being saved, we have been tempted, and we are men of like passions with others. I speak for my sisters as well as for my brothers here. We have all been tempted, and we have been well nigh thrown back to our old condition; but when we have fled to Christ, and trusted in him, our feet have stood firm even upon the brink of the precipice. We have passed through fire and water by way of trial and temptation, and yet we stand, for Christ is able to guard us even from stumbling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. We are not talking to you of things that we have dreamt. O sirs, we would not like to tell some of you how we have been tempted, how hard it has gone with us, how we have been saved by the skin of our teeth; but saved we have been, to the praise of God's mighty grace. Let his name be praised for ever and ever. That is our witness. If you would be kept from temptation, come and trust him, too.

We wish also to say that the Spirit of God coming from Christ moves men to high and noble thoughts. Selfishness no longer rules the man who believes in Christ; he loves his fellow-men, he desires their good, he can forgive them if they persecute him, he can lay down his life for them. Have we not had many who have gone forth among the heathen, and laid down their lives for Christ? I was speaking with a brother from the Congo on Monday, and I spoke of the many deaths there, and he said, "Yes, it looks a sad thing that so many missionaries should die; but, sir," he added, "that is the first thing that we have done in Africa that is really hopeful. I have often heard the natives say to me, 'These men must believe a true religion, or else they would not come here to die for us poor black men.' Men

begin to believe this new kind of evidence. The blood of the missionary becomes the seed of the Church." I do not doubt that it is so; and, beloved, if you and I can live wholly and alone for Christ, if we can live nobly, if we can get out of ourselves, if we can rise superior to worldly advantages, and prove that we believe all we say, we shall convince our fellow-men of the truth of our religion. This is what the Holy Spirit would have us to be, and we desire to obey his promptings more and more.

"Holy Spirit, dwell in me;
I, myself, would holy be."

I will not detain you many minutes more; but I must bear my testimony to the supporting power of Christ in the time of trouble. There are many here, who would have been in the asylum, in their time of trial, if it had not been that they could carry their grief to Christ. There are some of us who are not strangers to very acute pain, and to a long continuance of it, too; and we have found no comfort in the world like going to our Lord when racked with anguish, and torn with pain. There is a power about him to charm us into joy; when everything would drive us to distress, and almost to despair.

And, specially, I want to bear my witness, not of course a personal one, but that of an observer, as to the power of our holy religion in the hour of death. I have been at many death-beds; I have seen many Christians just about to die. There it is that the power of our holy religion comes in. How calm, how resigned, sometimes how triumphant, how ecstatic, is the frame of mind of the departing believer! I never heard one of them regret that he was a Christian. In times when men sift what they have done and believed, and when they tell no lies, for the naked truth comes up before them, I have heard them glory in belonging to Christ, and in resting in him; but I have never heard them regret that they did so. Our religion is not all of the future; it is not a thing that dreams concerning the world to come. It gives us present joy, present strength, present comfort, and we commend it to you most heartily, for this is our duty, to be witnesses for Christ. There are some who can give their evidence-in-chief, but the pity is that, when they come to be cross-examined, when they get among the ungodly in the world, they make a mess of it. The Lord have mercy upon some who come in among us, and even profess to know Christ, and do not; it is their lie that taints the testimony of the true in the judgment of mankind! Be you the more zealous to overbear their treachery by your consistency. Be you the more full of integrity, and stern truthfulness, and boundless love, to make up for these wounds which your Lord receives so often in the house of his friends.

May the Spirit of God rest upon you, beloved in the Lord, and may you hear your Master say to you, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me"! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—208, 663, 262.

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE IV. 16—30, IX. 57—62; AND MATTHEW XXVIII. 16—20.

We will read three short passages of Scripture, all relating to Christ's service. The first concerns the ministry of the Lord Jesus himself.

Luke iv. Verses 16—19. *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.*

What a glorious passage! This was the text of Christ's whole ministry; not only of that day at Nazareth, but of all his life ever after.

20. *And he closed the book,*

Rolled up the sacred writing,—

20. *And he gave it again to the minister, and sat down.*

Their practice was to sit down to speak, while the people usually stood to hear; a very good custom, indeed. If we did the same, perhaps we should have fewer of our hearers going to sleep.

20, 21. *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

That is the way to preach; bring home the Scripture to the present time, show its application to every-day life, especially point out its connection with Christ, and prove how it is fulfilled and verified in his sacred person. Doubtless, Jesus said a great deal besides what is here recorded; but there were no shorthand writers there to take down every word he uttered.

22. *And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?*

There! Did it matter whose son Jesus was? Yet, in order to abate the force and even the blessedness of divine truth, men turn their thoughts to the Speaker rather than to what he says. How foolish!

23. *And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.*

"Begin at home, work miracles here. You are the Son of the carpenter who lives here; now, do some wonderful work among us."

24—26. *And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

Elias did not feel bound to labour always among the Jews, but he went right to Sidon, to a heathen woman, and he sojourned with the widow in the far-away country. God is a Sovereign; he can save whom he wills; and he will exercise that sovereignty, and bless some of those who appear to be most hopeless, and to have the least signs of good about them, and to be the farthest removed from the means of grace.

27. *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*

Only the stranger and foreigner was cured of the disease of leprosy;

another instance of divine sovereignty. Men do not like this doctrine of sovereignty; they are willing to have a god if he is not God; they do not mind believing in a god who is not King, and who does not do as he wills with his own. They believe in free will, they say. Yes, yes, free will for everybody but God! Man is to be the god of man and of God, too, according to the talk of some. But this is the thunder from the divine throne: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." Blessed is he who humbly boweth his head, and saith, "Be it so, my Lord!" Absolute power cannot be in better hands than in those of the God of love.

28. *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,*

They were at first very pleased to have a promising young Preacher out of their own town, and they said one to another, "Did not he speak well?" Now they have changed their note; he has been too faithful for them. He has exalted God instead of man; and now they are filled with wrath.

29, 30. *And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.*

With that holy calm in which he always dwelt, with wondrous self-possession, he passed through the midst of them, and escaped their malice.

Now let us read what Christ says to those who would be his followers. Turn to—

Luke ix. Verse 57. *And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

He was a volunteer; but his zeal was too hot to hold out long. He had never fully known what following Christ meant, so he came forward without a thought.

58. *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

He did not reckon on such hard fare as that, to lie hard, and live hard; so we hear no more of him. That is would-be follower number one.

59. *And he said unto another, Follow me.*

Not a volunteer this time; but one actually called by Christ, and commanded to come, a conscript, as it were.

59. *But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

We do not even know that his father was dead. He would like to stop at home till the old man was ready to be buried.

60. *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

When Christ wants men to go upon his errands, they must make no excuses. The King's business requireth haste. The King's commands are peremptory. Other people could bury the dead; let them do it. They were not alive unto this holy ministry; they would therefore be doing right in stopping to bury the dead. When Christ says to a man, "Follow me," he must not let even the tenderest relationship detain him, or the most proper duties stand in the way of the highest duty. That is would-be follower number two. We hear no more of him.

61. *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

"Lord, I will follow thee; but I must have time. I want a little allowance, and a permit to leave home. I will follow thee; but let me first go and bid them farewell, which are at home at my house." It might be a

long distance; and as it was now Christ's time to send out the seventy, they must go at once, or not at all. This man intends to wait till he has gone, perhaps, fifty miles home, and back again.

62. *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*

You must go at once when you have orders to go, and not even the courtesies of life, or the fondnesses of affection, may make you disobey the command of the Captain. It would be a pretty thing, in the day of battle, if the soldiers came to the general, and one said, "I must go back to bury my father," and another said, "I cannot fight, for I want to go and bid farewell to my mother." The country would soon be in a desperate state for want of soldiers; and the great King, whose war is more important than any other, will not have for soldiers those who talk in this fashion. So, you see, there are three would-be followers gone; but there are at least seventy faithful followers left, as the next chapter shows.

Our third reading will be at the end of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Matthew xxviii. Verse 16. *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*

Away from the haunts of men, where he had been wont to be, in a country familiar to them, and with which he was familiar, in a despised country, "Galilee of the Gentiles."

17. *And when they saw him, they worshipped him:*

Probably this was the occasion referred to by Paul, when the risen Saviour "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once."

17. *But some doubted.*

There were some honest doubters then. The breed has been kept up ever since, only there are more dishonest doubters by a great deal than there are of honest ones now. We can never expect to be quite free from doubters in the church, since even in the presence of the newly-risen Christ "some doubted."

18. *And Jesus came and spake unto them,*

These words seem to imply that he came nearer to them than he was at first; unveiling himself still more, and revealing himself more clearly.

18, 19. *Saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,*

"Teach", that is, disciple, make disciples of "all nations."

19, 20. *Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:*

There is teaching again. It is as much the duty of the Christian to teach after baptism as to teach before baptism; he must be ever teaching. Hence believers are always to be learners, since Christ would have his servants always to be teachers: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We are not to invent a gospel; we are not to change, and shift, and cut, and shape it to meet the advancement of the age; Christ's command is plain: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

20. *And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

They have their commission, here is the seal to it; here is the source of their power; here is the society in which they are to work: "Lo, I am with you alway." God grant that you and I, going forth to teach for Christ, may always have the sound of our Master's feet with us, even to the end of the world! Amen.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S PASTORAL PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 22ND, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 1st, 1889.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them."—John xvii. 9, 10.

To begin with, I remark that our Lord Jesus pleads for his own people. When he puts on his priestly breastplate, it is for the tribes whose names are there. When he presents the atoning sacrifice, it is for Israel whom God hath chosen; and he utters this great truth, which some regard as narrow, but which we adore, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world." The point to which I want to call attention is this, the reason why Christ prays not for the world, but for his people. He puts it, "For they are thine," as if they were all the dearer to him because they were the Father's: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine." We might have half thought that Jesus would have said, "They are mine, and therefore I pray for them." It would have been true; but there would not have been the beauty of truth about it which we have here. He loves us all the better, and he prays for us all the more fervently, because we are the Father's. Such is his love to his Father, that our being the Father's sheds upon us an extra halo of beauty. Because we belong to the Father, therefore does the Saviour plead for us with all the greater earnestness at the throne of the heavenly grace.

But this leads us on to remember that our Lord had undertaken suretyship engagements on account of his people; he undertook to preserve the Father's gift: "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." He looked upon the sheep of his pasture as belonging to his Father, and the Father had put them into his charge, saying to him, "Of thine hand will I require them." As Jacob kept his uncle's flocks, by day the heat devoured him, and at

night the frost; but he was more careful over them because they were Laban's than if they had been his own; he was to give in an account of all the sheep committed to him, and he did so, and he lost none of Laban's sheep; but his care over them was partly accounted for by the fact that they did not belong to himself, but belonged to his uncle Laban.

Understand this twofold reason, then, for Christ's pastoral prayer for his people. He first prays for them because they belong to the Father, and therefore have a peculiar value in his eye; and next, because they belong to the Father, he is under suretyship engagements to deliver them all to the Father in that last great day when the sheep shall pass under the rod of him that telleth them. Now you see where I am bringing you to-night. I am not going to preach at this time to the world any more than Christ upon this occasion prayed for the world; but I am going to preach to his own people as he in this intercessory prayer pleaded for them. I trust that they will all follow me, step by step, through this great theme; and I pray the Lord that, in these deep central truths of the gospel we may find real refreshment for our souls to-night.

I. In calling your attention to my text, I want you to notice, first, THE INTENSITY OF THE SENSE OF PROPERTY WHICH CHRIST HAS IN HIS PEOPLE.

Here are *six words setting forth Christ's property in those who are saved:* "Them which thou hast *given me*"—(that is one); "for they are *thine*. And all *mine* are *thine*, and *thine* are *mine;* and I am glorified in them." There are certain persons so precious to Christ that they are marked all over with special tokens that they belong to him; as I have known a man write his name in a book which he has greatly valued, and then he has turned over some pages, and he has written his name again; and as we have sometimes known persons, when they have highly valued a thing, to put their mark, their seal, their stamp, here, there, and almost everywhere upon it. So, notice in my text how the Lord seems to have the seal in his hand, and he stamps it all over his peculiar possession: "They are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine." It is all possessive pronouns, to show that God looks upon his people as his portion, his possession, his property. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." Every man has something or other which he values above the rest of his estate; and here the Lord, by so often reiterating the words which signify possession, proves that he values his people above everything. Let us show that we appreciate this privilege of being set apart unto God; and let us each one say to him—

> "Take my poor heart, and let it be
> For ever closed to all but thee!
> Seal thou my breast, and let me wear
> That pledge of love for ever there."

I call your attention, next, to the fact that, while there are these six expressions here, *they are all applied to the Lord's own people.* "Mine" (that is, the saints) "are thine" (that is, the saints); "and thine" (that is, the saints) "are mine" (that is, the saints). These broad

arrows of the King of kings are all stamped upon his people. While the marks of possession are numerous, they are all set upon one object. What, doth not God care for anything else? I answer, No; as compared with his own people, he cares for nothing else. "The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." Has not God other things? Ah, what is there that he has not? The silver and the gold are his, and the cattle on a thousand hills. All things are of God; of him, and by him, and through him, and to him are all things; yet he reckons them not in comparison with his people. You know how you, dearly beloved, value your children much more than you do anything else. If there were a fire in your house to-night, and you could only carry one thing out of it, mother, would you hesitate a moment as to what that one thing should be? You would carry your babe, and let everything else be consumed in the flames; and it is so with God. He cares for his people beyond everything else. He is the Lord God of Israel, and in Israel he hath set his name, and there he takes his delight. There doth he rest in his love, and over her doth he rejoice with singing.

I want you to notice these different points, not because I can fully explain them all to you; but if I can only give you some of these great truths to think about, and to help you to communion with Christ to-night, I shall have done well. I want you to remark yet further, concerning these notes of possession, that *they occur in the private intercourse between the Father and the Son.* It is in our Lord's prayer, when he is in the inner sanctuary speaking with the Father, that we have these words, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." It is not to you and to me that he is talking now; the Son of God is speaking with the Father when they are in very near communion one with the other. Now, what does this say to me but that the Father and the Son greatly value believers? What people talk about when they are alone, not what they say in the market, not what they talk of in the midst of the confused mob, but what they say when they are in private, that lays bare their heart. Here is the Son speaking to the Father, not about thrones and royalties, nor cherubim and seraphim, but about poor men and women, in those days mostly fishermen and peasant folk, who believed on him. They are talking about these people, and the Son is taking his own solace with the Father in their secret privacy by talking about these precious jewels, these dear ones that are their peculiar treasure. You have not any notion how much God loves you. Dear brother, dear sister, you have never yet had half an idea, or the tithe of an idea, of how precious you are to Christ. You think, because you are so imperfect, and you fall so much below your own ideal, that, therefore, he does not love you much; you think that he cannot do so. Have you ever measured the depth of Christ's agony in Gethsemane, and of his death on Calvary? If you have tried to do so, you will be quite sure that, apart from anything in you or about you, he loves you with a love that passeth knowledge. Believe it. "But I do not love him as I should," I think I hear you say. No, and you never will unless you first know his love to you. Believe it; believe it to the highest degree, that he so loves you that, when there is no one who can commune with him but the Father, even then their converse

is about their mutual estimate of you, how much they love you: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine."

Only one other thought under this head, and I do but put it before you, and leave it with you, for I cannot expound it to-night. *All that Jesus says is about all his people*, for he says, "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." These high, secret talks are not about some few saints who have reached a "higher life", but about all of us who belong to him. Jesus bears all of us on his heart, and he speaks of us all to the Father: "All mine are thine." "That poor woman who could never serve her Lord except by patient endurance, she is mine," says Jesus. "She is thine, great Father." "That poor girl, newly-converted, whose only spiritual life was spent upon a sick-bed, and then she exhaled to heaven, like a dewdrop of the morning, she is mine, and she is thine. That poor child of mine, who often stumbles, who never brought much credit to the sacred name, he is mine, and he is thine. All mine are thine." I seem as if I heard a silver bell ringing out; the very tones of the words are like the music from the harps of angels: "Mine,—thine; thine,—mine." May such sweet risings and fallings of heavenly melodies charm all our ears!

I think that I have said enough to show you the intensity of the sense of property which Christ has in his people: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine."

II. The next head of my discourse is, THE INTENSITY OF UNITED INTEREST BETWEEN THE FATHER AND THE SON CONCERNING BELIEVERS.

First, let me say that *Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father.* Turn that truth over. "My Father has chosen them, my Father loves them; therefore," says Jesus, "I love them, and I lay down my life for them, and I will take my life again for them, and live throughout eternity for them. They are dear to me because they are dear to my Father." Have you not often loved another person for the sake of a third one upon whom all your heart was set? There is an old proverb, and I cannot help quoting it just now; it is, "Love me, love my dog." It is as if the Lord Jesus so loved the Father that even such poor dogs as we are get loved by him for his Father's sake. To the eyes of Jesus we are radiant with beauty because God hath loved us.

Now turn that thought round the other way, *the Father loves us because we belong to Christ.* At first, the Father's love in election was sovereign and self-contained; but now, to-day, since he has given us over to Christ, he takes a still greater delight in us. "They are my Son's sheep," says he; "he bought them with his blood." Better still, "That is my Son's spouse," says he, "that is my Son's bride. I love her for his sake." There was that first love which came fresh from the Father's heart, but now, through this one channel of love to Jesus, the Father pours a double flood of love on us for his dear Son's sake. He sees the blood of Jesus sprinkled on us; he remembers the token, and for the sake of his beloved Son he prizes us beyond all price. Jesus loves us because we belong to the Father, and the Father loves us because we belong to Jesus.

Now come closer still to the central thought of the text, "All mine are thine." *All who are the Son's are the Father's.* Do we belong to

Jesus? Then we belong to the Father. Have I been washed in the precious blood? Can I sing to-night—

"The dying thief rejoiced to see
That fountain in his day;
And there have I, though vile as he,
Washed all my sins away"?

Then, by redemption I belong to Christ; but at the same time I may be sure that I belong to the Father: "All mine are thine." Are you trusting in Christ? Then you are one of God's elect. That high and deep mystery of predestination need trouble no man's heart if he be a believer in Christ. If thou believest in Christ, Christ hath redeemed thee, and the Father chose thee from before the foundation of the world. Rest thou happy in that firm belief, "All mine are thine." How often have I met with people puzzling themselves about election! They want to know if they are elect. No man can come to the Father but by Christ; no man can come to election except through redemption. If you have come to Christ, and are his redeemed, it is certain beyond all doubt that you were chosen of God, and are the Father's elect. "All mine are thine."

So, if I am bought by Christ's precious blood, I am not to sit down, and say how grateful I am to Christ as though he were apart from the Father, and more loving and more tender than the Father. No, no; I belong to the Father if I belong to Christ; and I have for the Father the same gratitude, the same love, and I would render the same service as to Jesus; for Jesus puts it, "All mine are thine."

If, to-night, also, I am a servant of Christ, if, because he bought me, I try to serve him, then I am a servant of the Father if I am a servant of the Son. "All mine, whatever position they occupy, belong to thee, great Father," and they have all the privileges which come to those who belong to the Father. I hope that I do not weary you; I cannot make these things entertaining to the careless, I do not try to do so; but you who love my Lord, and his truth, ought to rejoice to-night to think that, in being the property of Christ, you are assured that you are the property of the Father. "All mine are thine."

"With Christ our Lord we share our part
In the affections of his heart;
Nor shall our souls be thence removed
Till he forgets his first-beloved."

But now you have to look at the other part of it: "and thine are mine." *All who are the Father's are the Son's.* If you belong to the Father, you belong to the Son. If you are elect, and so the Father's, you are redeemed, and so the Son's. If you are adopted, and so the Father's, you are justified in Christ, and so you are the Son's. If you are regenerated, and so are begotten of the Father, yet still your life is dependent upon the Son. Remember that, while one Biblical figure sets us forth as children who have each one a life within himself, another equally valid figure represents us as branches of the Vine, which die unless they continue united to the stem. "All thine are mine." If you are the Father's, you must be Christ's. If your life is given you of the Father, it still depends entirely upon the Son.

What a wonderful mixture all this is! The Father and the Son are one, and we are one with the Father and with the Son. A mystic union is established between us and the Father, by reason of our union with the Son, and the Son's union with the Father. See to what a glorious height our humanity has risen through Christ. By the grace of God, ye who were like stones in the brook are made sons of God. Lifted out of your dead materialism, you are elevated into a spiritual life, and you are united unto God. You have not any idea to-night of what God has already done for you, and truly it doth not yet appear what you shall be. A Christian man is the noblest work of God. God has here reached the fulness of his power and his grace, in making us to be one with his own dear Son, and so bringing us into union and communion with himself. Oh, if the words that I speak could convey to you the fulness of their own meaning, you might spring to your feet, electrified with holy joy to think of this, that we should be Christ's, and the Father's, and that we should be thought worthy to be the object of intricate transactions and inter-communions of the dearest kind between the Father and the Son! We, even we, who are but dust and ashes at our very best, are favoured as angels never were; therefore let all praise be ascribed to sovereign grace!

III. And now I shall only detain you a few minutes longer while I speak upon the third part of our subject, that is, THE GLORY OF CHRIST: "And I am glorified in them." I must confess that, while the former part of my subject was very deep, this third part seems to me to be deeper still, "I am glorified in them."

If Christ had said, "I will glorify them," I could have understood it. If he had said, "I am pleased with them," I might have set it down to his great kindness to them; but when he says, "I am glorified in them," it is very wonderful. The sun can be reflected, but you need proper objects to act as reflectors; and the brighter they are, the better will they reflect. You and I do not seem to have the power of reflecting Christ's glory; we break up the glorious rays that shine upon us; we spoil, we ruin so much of the good that falls upon us. Yet Christ says that he is glorified in us. Take these words home, dear friend, to yourself, and think that the Lord Jesus met you to-night, and as you went out of the Tabernacle, said to you, "Thou art mine, thou art my Father's; and I am glorified in thee." I dare not say that it would be a proud moment for you; but I dare to say that there would be more in it to make you feel exalted for him to say, "I am glorified in you," than if you could have all the honours that all the kings can put upon all men in the world. I think that I could say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word," if he would but say to me, "I am glorified in thy ministry." I hope that he is; I believe that he is; but, oh, for an assuring word, if not spoken to us personally, yet spoken to his Father about us, as in our text, "I am glorified in them"!

How can this be? Well, it is a very wide subject. Christ is glorified in his people in many ways. *He is glorified by saving such sinners*, taking these people, so sinful, so lost, so unworthy. When the Lord lays hold upon a drunkard, a thief, an adulterer, when he arrests one who has been guilty of blasphemy, whose very heart is reeking with evil

thoughts, when he picks up the far-off one, the abandoned, the dissolute, the fallen, as he often does, and when he says, "These shall be mine; I will wash these in my blood; I will use these to speak my word," oh, then, he is glorified in them! Read the lives of many great sinners who have afterwards become great saints, and you will see how they have tried to glorify him, not only she who washed his feet with her tears, but many another like her. Oh, how they have loved to praise him! Eyes have wept tears, lips have spoken words, but hearts have felt what neither eyes nor lips could speak, of adoring gratitude to him. "I am glorified in them." Great sinners, Christ is glorified in you. Some of you Pharisees, if you were to be converted, would not bring Christ such glory as he gets through saving publicans and harlots. Even if you struggled into heaven, it would be with very little music for him on the road, certainly no tears and no ointment for his feet, and no wiping them with the hairs of your head. You are too respectable ever to do that; but when he saves great sinners, he can truly say, "I am glorified in them," and each of them can sing,—

> "It passeth praises, that dear love of thine,
> My Jesus, Saviour: yet this heart of mine
> Would sing that love, so full, so rich, so free,
> Which brings a rebel sinner, such as me,
> Nigh unto God."

And *Christ is glorified by the perseverance which he shows in the matter of their salvation.* See how he begins to save, and the man resists. He follows up his kind endeavour, and the man rebels. He hunts him, pursues him, dogs his footsteps. He will have the man, and the man will not have him. But the Lord, without violating the free will of man, which he never does, yet at length brings the one who was most unwilling to lie at his feet, and he that hated most begins to love, and he that was most stout-hearted bows the knee in lowliest humility. It is wonderful how persevering the Lord is in the salvation of a sinner; ay, and in the salvation of his own, for you would have broken loose long ago if your great Shepherd had not penned you up within the fold. Many of you would have started aside, and have lost yourselves, if it had not been for constraints of sovereign grace which have kept you to this day, and will not let you go. Christ is glorified in you. Oh, when you once get to heaven, when the angels know all that you were, and all that you tried to be, when the whole story of almighty, infinite grace is told, as it will be told, then will Christ be glorified in you!

Beloved, *we actively glorify Christ when we display Christian graces.* You who are loving, forgiving, tender-hearted, gentle, meek, self-sacrificing, you glorify him; he is glorified in you. You who are upright, and who will not be moved from your integrity, you who can despise the sinner's gold, and will not sell your conscience for it, you who are bold and brave for Christ, you who can bear and suffer for his name's sake, all your graces come from him. As all the flowers are bred and begotten of the sun, so all that is in you that is good comes from Christ, the Sun of righteousness; and therefore he is glorified in you.

But, beloved, God's people have glorified Christ in many other ways. *When they make him the object of all their trust, they glorify him*, when they say, "Though I am the chief of sinners, yet I trust him; though my mind is dark, and though my temptations abound, I believe that he can save to the uttermost, I do trust him." Christ is more glorified by a sinner's humble faith than by a seraph's loudest song. If thou believest, thou dost glorify him. Child of God, are you to-night very dark, and dull, and heavy? Do you feel half dead, spiritually? Come to your Lord's feet, and kiss them, and believe that he can save, nay, that he has saved you, even you; and thus you will glorify his holy name. "Oh!" said a believer, the other day, "I know whom I have believed; Christ is mine." "Ah!" said another, "that is presumption." Beloved, it is nothing of the kind; it is not presumption for a child to own his own father; it might be pride for him to be ashamed of his father; it is certainly great alienation from his father if he is ashamed to own him. "I know whom I have believed." Happy state of heart, to be absolutely sure that you are resting upon Christ, that he is your Saviour, that you believe in him, for Jesus said, "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." I believe on him, and I have everlasting life. "He that believeth on him is not condemned." I believe on him, and I am not condemned. Make sure work of this, not only by signs and evidences, but do even better; make the one sign and the one evidence to be this, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; I, a sinner, accept his great sacrifice, and I am saved."

Especially, I think that *God's people glorify Christ by a cheerful conversation.* If you go about moaning and mourning, pining and complaining, you bring no honour to his name; but if, when thou fastest, thou appear not unto men to fast, if thou canst wear a cheerful countenance, even when thy heart is heavy, and if, above all, thou canst rally thy spirit out of its depths, and begin to bless God when the cupboard is empty, and friends are few, then thou wilt indeed glorify Christ.

Many are the ways in which this good work may be done; let us try to do it. "I am glorified in them," says Christ; that is, *by their bold confession of Christ.* Do I address myself to any here who love Christ, but who have never owned it? Do come out, and come out very soon. He deserves to have all the glory that you can give him. If he has healed you, be not like the nine who forgot that Christ had healed their leprosy. Come and praise the name of the great Healer, and let others know what Christ can do. I am afraid that there are a great many here to-night who hope that they are Christians, but they have never said so. What are you ashamed of? Ashamed of your Lord? I am afraid that you do not, after all, love him. Now, at this time, at this particular crisis of the history of the Church and the world, if we do not publicly take sides with Christ, we shall really be against him. The time is come now when we cannot afford to have go-betweens. You must be for him or for his enemies; and to-night he asks you if you are really his, to say it. Come forward, unite yourself with his people, and let it be seen by your life and conversation that you do belong to Christ. If not, how can it be true, "I am glorified in them"? Is Christ glorified in a non-confessing people, a

people that hope to go slinking into heaven by the by-roads or across the fields, but dare not come into the King's highway, and travel with the King's subjects, and own that they belong to him?

Lastly, I think that *Christ is glorified in his people by their efforts to extend his kingdom.* What efforts are you making? There is a great deal of force in a church like this; but I am afraid that there is a great deal of waste steam, waste power here. The tendency is, so often, to leave everything to be done by the minister, or else by one or two leading people; but I do pray you, beloved, if you be Christ's, and if you belong to the Father, if, unworthy though you be, you are claimed with a double ownership by the Father and the Son, do try to be of use to them. Let it be seen by your winning others to Christ that he is glorified in you. I believe that, by diligent attendance to even the smallest Sabbath-school class, Christ is glorified in you. By that private conversation in your own room, by that letter which you dropped into the post with many a prayer, by anything that you have done with a pure motive, trusting in God in order to glorify Christ, he is glorified in you. Do not mistake my meaning with regard to serving the Lord. I think it exceedingly wrong when I hear exhortations made to young people, "Quit your service as domestics, and come out into spiritual work. Business men, leave your shops. Workmen, give up your trades. You cannot serve Christ in that calling, come away from it altogether." I beg to say that nothing will be more pestilent than such advice as that. There are men called by the grace of God to separate themselves from every earthly occupation, and they have special gifts for the work of the ministry; but ever to imagine that the bulk of Christian people cannot serve God in their daily calling, is to think altogether contrary to the mind of the Spirit of God. If you are a servant, remain a servant. If you are a waiter, go on with your waiting. If you are a tradesman, go on with your trade. Let every man abide in the calling wherein he is called, unless there be to him some special call from God to devote himself to the ministry. Go on with your employment, dear Christian people, and do not imagine that you are to turn hermits, or monks, or nuns. You would not glorify God if you did so act. Soldiers of Christ are to fight the battle out where they are. To quit the field, and shut yourselves up alone, would be to render it impossible that you should get the victory. The work of God is as holy and acceptable in domestic service, or in trade, as any service that can be rendered in the pulpit, or even by the foreign missionary. We thank God for the men specially called and set apart for his own work; but we know that they would do nothing unless the salt of our holy faith should permeate the daily life of other Christians. You godly mothers, you are the glory of the Church of Christ. You hard-working men and women, who endure patiently "as seeing him who is invisible," are the crown and glory of the Church of God. You who do not shirk your daily labour, but stand manfully to it, obeying Christ in it, are proving what the Christian religion was meant to do. We can, if we are truly priests unto God, make our everyday garments into vestments, our meals into sacraments, and our houses into temples for God's worship. Our very

beds will be within the veil, and our inmost thoughts will be as a sweet incense perpetually smoking up to the Most High. Dream not that there is anything about any honest calling that degrades a man, or hinders him in glorifying God; but sanctify it all, till the bells upon the horses shall ring out, "Holiness to the Lord," and the pots in your houses shall be as holy as the vessels of the sanctuary.

Now, I want that we should so come to the communion-table to-night, that even here Christ may be glorified in us. Ah, you may sit at the Lord's table wearing a fine dress or a diamond ring, and you may think that you are somebody of importance, but you are not! Ah, you may come to the Lord's table, and say, "Here is an experienced Christian man who knows a thing or two." You are not glorifying Christ that way; you are only a nobody. But if you come to-night saying, "Lord, I am hungry, thou canst feed me;" that is glorifying him. If you come saying, "Lord, I have no merit, and no worthiness, I come because thou hast died for me, and I trust thee," you are glorifying him. He glorifies Christ most who takes most from him, and who then gives most back to him. Come, empty pitcher, come and be filled; and, when thou art filled, pour all out at the dear feet of him who filled thee. Come, trembler, come and let him touch thee with his strengthening hand, and then go out and work, and use the strength which he has given thee. I fear that I have not led you where I wanted to bring you, close to my Lord and to the Father, yet I have done my best. May the Lord forgive my feebleness and wandering, and yet bless you for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XVII.

Verses 1, 2. *These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*

Here the doctrines of a general and a particular redemption sweetly blend: "As thou hast given him power over all flesh," they are all under Christ's mediatorial government by virtue of his matchless sacrifice; but the object in view is specially the gift of everlasting life to the chosen people: "that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

No man has life eternal, then, who is in ignorance of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ; but once to know God, and to know Christ, is sure evidence that we possess a life that can never die: "This is life eternal."

4—6. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

Is not that sweetly put on the part of our divine Lord? These chosen men had been poor creatures at the very best; very forgetful and very

erring; yet their Lord brings no charges against them. but he says to his Father, "They have kept thy word."

7. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.*

"They have learnt to link the Father and the Son; they know that though I am the channel of all blessing, yet thou, O my Father, art the fountain from which it flows."

> "Jesus, we bless thy Father's name!
> Thy God and ours are both the same;
> What heavenly blessings from his throne
> Flow down to sinners through his Son!"

8. *For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.*

He is looking at them in contrast with the world which utterly rejected him; in contrast with that world, the disciples had received and known Christ. Oh, what a blessed distinction does the grace of God make between men! We were all blind by nature; and now that we see, it is because the sacred finger of Christ hath touched our eyes, and opened them. Let him have all the glory of it; yet let us note how well he speaks of his people: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

9, 10. *I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.*

Oh, the blessed union of interests between Christ and the Father! How surely do we belong to the Father if we in very deed belong to Christ, and what a holy unity is thus established!

11. *And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.*

Here is a prayer, then, for the preservation and the unity of the people of God; two very necessary petitions. Would God that they might be fulfilled in us, that we might be kept, and kept even to the end, and then kept in living union with all the people of God, and with the Father and with the Son!

12, 13. *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.*

In this wondrous prayer, note the special design of the words of Christ; not only that we might have joy, but that we might have Christ's joy, and not merely have a little of it, but might have it fulfilled in ourselves.

14—16. *I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*

Jesus puts twice over this most special and important fact, which we must never forget: "They are not of the world." Let us never live as if we were of the world; but where such a vivid distinction has been made, God grant that there may be an equal distinction in our lives!

Now comes the prayer for sanctification.

17, 18. *Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*

Christ was the great Missionary, the Messiah, the Sent One; we are the minor missionaries, sent out into the world to accomplish the Father's will and purpose.

19, 20. *And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;*

That shows that Christ's prayer embraces us also who have been brought to believe on him through the word which the apostles declared. Christ, with prescient eye, looked on every one of us who believe on him, and prayed for each one of us as much as he did for John, and Peter, and James.

21, 22. *That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*

Unity is the glory of the Church of Christ. It shall be the very crown of the Church of the living God; and when she puts it on, then will the wondering world acknowledge and accept her Lord.

23. *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*

Wonderful words! How shall we dive into their depths? To think that the Father should have loved us even as he loved his only-begotten Son; oh, the heights and depths of this wondrous love!

24, 25. *Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.*

You notice the division that there is here. There are two parties; there is the world, and there is the Church; what is it that divides them? Read these two clauses: "The world hath not known thee:" "These have known that thou hast sent me." What stands between? "But I have known thee." It is Christ himself, coming in between the two parties, like the cloudy-fiery pillar, black with darkness to the Egyptians, but bright with light to the Israelites. Oh, to have Christ between you and the world! It is the best form of separation: "I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

26. *And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:*

I read it to you as it stands. Our good translators were always afraid of using a word too often, for fear of falling into tautology; so for what they considered the beauty of the language they used the word "declared" instead of "made known"; but why should they have done so? Who were they that they should have wanted to improve on Christ's words? It should be the same word right on: "The world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have made known unto them thy name, and will make it known:"

26. *That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.*

Oh, that this love may be in us, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—728, 760.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

LESSONS FROM THE MANNA.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 29TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, September 12th, 1889.

"Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."—Exodus xvi. 4.

IT seems to us that it must have been a very difficult thing to supply food for the hundreds of thousands, I shall not be incorrect if I say the millions, who were in the wilderness; but, difficult as that was, the commissariat was not so difficult as the education. To train that mob of slaves into a nation under discipline, to lift up those who had been in bondage, and make them fit to enjoy national privileges, this was the Herculean task that Moses had to perform. And their God, who loved the children of Israel, and chose them, and determined to make them a peculiar people unto himself, undertook to teach them, and he used their food as part of the means of their education. Animals are often taught through their food. When they could not be reached in any other way, they have been instructed by their hunger, and by their thirst, and by their feeding. And the Lord, who knew of what a coarse nature Israel was composed, and how the people had degenerated from the old stock during their long bondage, took care to teach them by every means, not only by the higher and the more spiritual, by the typical and symbolical, but he also taught them by their hunger and by their thirst, by the supply of water from the rock, and by the manna which he rained from heaven.

We will try to see, to-night, what the Lord taught them, and we will do more than that; we will try to learn what they learned, and somewhat more. May the Holy Spirit himself be our Teacher, and as he has often taught us the divinest lessons by the bread and wine, preaching to our very hearts by what seemed the lowly ministry of food and drink, so may he, to-night, teach us by that angels' bread, wherewith Israel was fed in the wilderness long years ago!

First, I invite you to consider *how the Lord taught these people by his gift;* and next, *how he taught them by making this gift a test to them;* thirdly, I shall have to show *how he teaches us lessons as to temporal things;* and lastly, *how he instructs us as to our spiritual food.*

I. First, then, dear friends, let us consider HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY HIS GIFT.

He wanted them to know him; his great desire was that they should know Jehovah their God. If they knew God, they would know all else; for, after all, "the proper study of mankind" is God; and when man knows his God, he knows himself; but if he thinks that he knows himself while he knows not his God, he is greatly mistaken.

God desired, then, to teach them himself by the gift of the manna: and he taught them, first, *his care over them*, that he was their God, and that they were his people, and that he would lay himself out to provide for them. Think of the care that God had over them, over each one of them, for each man had his own omer of manna. No woman, no child, was forgotten. Every morning, there was the sufficient quantity for every man, according to his eating for that day. There was no more; and there was never any less; so carefully did God watch over each individual. The individuality of the divine love is a great part of the sweetness of it. God thinks of every separate child of his as much as if he had only that one. The multiplicity of his elect does not divide the loaf of his affection. He has an infinite affection for each one, and he will take care of the details of each chosen life. He will see your omer just filled, precisely, to an ounce. He will give you all you can possibly require; but he will give you nothing that you can lay by to minister to your pride.

And this care was shown every day. The Lord taught them the continuity of his remembrance by its coming every day. If he had sent one great rain of liberalities to refresh his inheritance, and had bidden them gather up the vast store, and carry it with them in all their journeyings, they could not so well have learned his care as when he sent it fresh every morning. Besides, they would have had the burden of carrying it, and they were free from that, for the heavenly supplies were always close at hand, exactly at the spot where they pitched their tents, and tarried. Every morning, there was the manna precisely where they needed it, and that without any man's shoulder being made raw by carrying his food in his kneading-trough. The Lord teaches you and me, in the same way, that he not only cares for each one, but cares for each one each day and each moment, tracking our footsteps, and meting out the full supply of the hour according as the peculiar necessity arises. "He is always thoughtful, always thoughtful of me," thou mayest say of thy Lord; "always thoughtful of all the brotherhood, of the whole company of the redeemed, but none the less thoughtful of each one because there are so many myriads to be cared for every moment of every day." Was not that a sweet lesson for the children of Israel to learn as they gathered their daily bread?

But Jehovah taught them, next, *his greatness.* He had taught them that in Egypt by his mighty plagues, and at the Red Sea, when he branded the breast of the waters with his mighty rod. But now he

gently taught them his greatness, his exceeding greatness, first, by the quantity of the manna. There was enough for them all. How much it required, I leave arithmeticians to calculate; I cannot go into that question to-night. But, remember, that quantity fell every morning for forty years. What a great God is he who could feed the canvas city of his chosen people for forty years at a stretch, and yet without his stores being ever drained! His greatness was also seen by the mode in which he fed these myriads. Usually our bread springs up from the soil, but these people were in a waste howling wilderness. Wonder of wonders, their bread came down from the sky! Shall men live on air? Will you sustain a population on mist, and cloud, and dew? Yet out of a seeming vacuum came a constant plenty. Every morning the earth was covered with the heaped-up food of all that multitude; and they had nothing to do but to go out and gather it. What a God is this whose marchings through the wilderness were so marvellous! Jehovah, thy paths drop fatness! Wherever thou dost put thy foot, the wilderness and the solitary place are glad for thee. If thou dost lead thy people through a desert, it is no desert to them. The heavens supply what the earth denies. Behold, the greatness of your God, ye who are fed by his care!

And, next, they learned *his liberality combined with his greatness*, for every day they were fed; but not fed as Joseph supplied the people in Egypt, when he took from them all their stores to buy the corn, and at last took themselves to be bondsmen unto Pharaoh, and their lands to be Pharaoh's freehold, that they might live. No; there was never a pretence of paying for that daily bread. The richest man had his omer filled, but he paid not a doit for it; and the poorest man had his omer just as full at the same price. There was "nothing to pay"; no manna-tax was ever exacted of the Israelite's hand. Oh, the liberality of God! His cry is, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk." Do you notice how Jehovah's invitation grows? He says at first, "Come ye to the waters," but he corrects himself before he gets through with it, and says, "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." The Lord is infinitely good, essentially. He is growingly good, experimentally. The more we trust him, the more we discover of his liberality. He "giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." He scarcely upbraided Israel despite their frequent murmurings, but the manna fell continually; and the abundance of it must always have struck the people. God's liberality never stinted them. Oh, yes, I have no doubt that it is quite right to weigh out the bread, and to weigh out the meat, so much bone and so much fat to be allowed to every prisoner in the gaol, and possibly to every pauper in the poor-house! But that is not God's way of going to work. Though we deserve to be in prison, and though we are all of us pensioners on his bounty, yet he gives each one his omer full. If a man has a large appetite, he may eat as much as he likes, and the manna seems to grow while he is eating; and if he has a small appetite, though he may have gathered much, yet still he will have nothing over. God supplied the manna bountifully, yet exactly according to the capacity of the receiver.

This brings me to say that the children of Israel also learned *God's immutability*, for they had been fed with manna all through the wilderness. Some old man may have said, "I remember going out the first time to gather my omerful. I was astonished at it; and my neighbours kept calling out, 'Man-hu? Man-hu? Man-hu?' They were all wonderstruck; they did not know what to call it; so they asked, 'What is it?' They called it, 'Man-hu?' And now," said he, "I have been out all these years. Thank God, I have never had a swollen foot, so that I could not go out to gather it. It has always been just as white, and just as round, and just as plentiful, and just as near my tent as at the first. I used to live over on the left side of the camp, and I moved to the right; but I always found that the manna was equally plentiful in every direction wherever I went. And it is so now," the old man would say, "it is so now; and it is just as sweet, and just as plentiful, and just as freely to be had for nothing by every man who chooses to go out and gather it. Blessed be God, he changes not, and therefore we sons of Jacob are not consumed! If he had changed, the manna would have failed us, and we should have been consumed with hunger." Jehovah still lives, O child of God! Thou hast just buried one very dear to thee, but the Lord liveth still; he never fails. It may be that thy income is getting shorter; the brook Cherith is drying up, and the ravens have not been with the bread and meat lately. Still Jehovah lives; and there is a widow over at Zarephath, who will have her commission to take care of the Lord's servant. Jehovah lives; his eye is not dim, his ear is not heavy, his arm is not short. Therefore trust thou in the unchanging God, and be not afraid. The manna shall fall from heaven till thou shalt eat the old corn in Canaan.

Do you not think, beloved, that from this gift the children of Israel also learned *God's wisdom?* If they were not sensible enough to know it, he had given them the best food that he could give them. In that hot climate, if they had eaten flesh-meat continually, they would often have been ill. When the Lord did allow them quails in answer to their cravings, while the meat was yet in their mouths they were taken with deadly sickness. It was unwholesome for them to have flesh-meat; this manna from on high was the best thing for people living in tents, journeying from place to place, over a burning sand, beneath a scorching sky. The Lord had adapted the food to the people; yet they said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." The very name they gave to it showed that it was just the right sort of food for them, easy of digestion. God had adapted their food to their position in the wilderness; no doctor could have drawn up a dietary table that was equal in wisdom to the one prepared by God for his people while they were in that condition.

And he showed his wisdom, too, in the quantity provided, it was always the right measure. "He that gathered much had nothing over;" the manna seemed to shrink to the right quantity. "He that gathered little had no lack;" the manna seemed to swell and increase so that there was exactly enough to an ounce for all those multitudes. Oh, the infinite wisdom of God! How I have often admired his promptness to a moment, his exactness to a drachm, for with him there

are no more small mistakes than great ones! He never errs in any sense or way; but he hits the mark precisely in all that he does.

And then, once more, the Israelites must have learned *his goodness*, because he had not supplied them with tasteless food. According to the Apocrypha, which is not to be received as Scripture, but still is often valuable in some respects, each man tasted the manna according to his own liking. There was something about it that enabled the mouth to give its own flavour to it; and their marchings through the wilderness, and their weariness, would often add a sauce to it that made it exceedingly sweet to them. It was like wafers made with honey, not at all unpalatable. It was, as I have already told you, like fresh oil, by no means disagreeable to an Eastern. God did not give them beggar's food, spare scraps and broken victuals. He had said, "I will rain bread from heaven for you," and he kept his word. The least bit of heaven's bread must be delicious to the taste. "Man did eat angels' food," said the psalmist; and that cannot be bad food which falls from the table of cherubim and seraphim, such food as spirits might partake of if they might partake of any, light, and pure, and ethereal, and spiritual, as far removed from the grosser forms of materialism as food well could be, a godlike food for a godlike race if they had but been worthy of their destiny, and had been willing to learn what God was so ready to teach them.

II. Notice, dear friends, in the second place, HOW THE LORD TAUGHT THESE PEOPLE BY MAKING THIS MANNA A TEST TO THEM.

Their position was in many respects a very pleasant one. They had not to work for daily bread, they had only to go out and gather it. There it was, but here is the point for us to observe. *It was given every day;* they never had any store. A man who gathered manna for twenty years might say, in language that I have often heard, "I ain't a bit forrarder, I am just where I was twenty years ago," as if it was not getting forwarder to be twenty years older, and to have had twenty years of mercy. Yet there was no store of manna; all up and down the wilderness there was not a single bank in which people could put their money, there was no such thing as a dividend to be received by anybody, and nobody could be laying up anything. Each Israelite had what he wanted for the day; he kept on having just so much and no more, and this was a test. Could he endure that test?

And then, again, as there was no store for the whole of them, and they did not get any richer, so there was no opportunity for greed, for *it was given to every man.* He who thrust out his two hands to rake up the manna, when he returned to his tent, had an omerful for himself, and his wife, and his eight children, but he had not any more. He thought the next day, perhaps, that he would sweep away by the half-hour together if he could, as long as the dew was remaining, and get an extra quantity; but when he examined it, he had exactly as much as he and his family could eat, and no more. The rest was all gone, evaporated, and nothing was left over and above what he needed; and his poor palsied neighbour, who could only get a little together in his basin with his hand, found that, somehow, he had enough, for God made it to grow in the basin, and when he looked at it, there was just enough for the day's supply.

"Oh!" says one, "I should like that." Well, I agree with you; I should like that. How long would you like it? I dare say, about as long as these Israelites did, and you would begin grumbling just as they did. Here was God's test of them: every day, and no store; every man, and no greed. It is so with grace; God gives us as much grace as we want, but there is nobody here who has any grace laid up. Oh, yes! I heard one person say that she had so much grace that she had not sinned for months. Ugh! I thought I smelt something. I did not say anything; but I remembered what manna does when it is kept, and there I left the subject. I hope none of you think that you have more grace than you need, because you have not. You may, possibly, have as much grace as will last you through to-day; but you will need as much as that to-morrow morning, if not more. Oh, yes, I know that you have an iron safe, and you go and rattle your keys, and you say, "Look here; I have grace enough locked up for the next six weeks." Go again, and you will be glad to run away from the stench, for you will find that you have locked up so much pride, and nothing else. We do not want dying grace till we come to die; be satisfied to have living grace while you live. You do not want grace to preach to-night, dear friends; you want grace to sit and hear. That may, perhaps, require as much grace as I need for preaching; but do not you ask for my grace, as I will not ask for yours. Eat your own manna. Do eat it; do not lay it up, it is not meant to be stored up, it must be eaten. This gift of the manna, every day for every man, was a test by which the Lord taught the children of Israel.

So was *that Friday storing*, when they said to themselves, "We get into the habit of gathering our food every morning, but here comes this Friday, when we have to gather twice as much." I do like consistency, always doing the same thing; but here is a command to do twice as much once a week, here is a law that shifts a bit. I like systematic theology; but here is a sliding seat. Here is a double supply for Friday, and I have to store half of it up. So one man did not store it up when he was told to do so, and another man tried to store it up when he was told not to do so. Thus the Lord tested and tried them. It is a wonderful thing, that testing to which God puts us. Sometimes, when we think that we have such a surplus of faith in him, he just tests us, and we find that we have not any. The grandest life is a life of dependence upon God, for that is true independence. If you wholly depend upon God, then have you risen to independence. He who has nothing but what God gives him day by day, has a competence. He is the man who has saved most who has least, for he is saved from the worry of taking care of it. If he is still dependent upon God's providence, and faith can keep her hold, he is the best-off man after all. You said that you envied the Israelites. Ah, well, you may; but you want faith, or else what might be a theme of envy becomes a subject of discontent. So I leave that point.

III. My time has pretty well gone, so I will only hint at what I would have said had there been time. Observe, HOW THE LORD TEACHES US BY THIS MANNA AS TO TEMPORAL THINGS.

First, he teaches us that *our supplies depend upon him.* Where did all the manna come from? It all came from God. Child of God, all

thy supplies must come from God. Learn thou that. Whatever the second causes, whatever the intermediary sources, all thou art to have will come whence all thou hast had has come, namely, from God.

Learn, next, that *our supplies are sure to faith*. If the manna did not fail for forty years, neither will the Lord fail to supply thy needs. Thy God will give thee thy livery, if thou art his servant. He will give thee thy daily rations also, if thou servest him. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." He who carves for himself will cut his fingers, and get an empty plate; but he who waits for the great Host of all the chosen family to carve for him shall have enough, and that of the best. "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

But learn from the children of Israel that *our supplies will have to be gathered and prepared by ourselves*. God sent the manna from heaven; but the people had to go out every morning, and get it in; and when they had gathered it, we read that they used to beat it in mortars, or grind it in mills, and bake it in pans, and make it into cakes. God is not the patron of idleness. He will have his people work; and his rule is, "If any man will not work, neither shall he eat," a rule he often carries out with those who are idlers. But, beloved, we thank God for opportunities for diligence. Though labour came at first as a curse, God has turned it into a blessing.

And, once more, *our supplies ought to content us*, for the children of Israel had enough for all their needs. They had no superfluities; but they had all-sufficiency. They had no luxuries; but yet if they chose to think so, their daily mercies became luxuries to them. Oh, that God might teach us to trust him as to temporals!

IV. Now for my last point, and I beg your patience for a few minutes only. How the Lord teaches us by this manna as to our spiritual food. Here also I will only give you hints.

Every day you and I ought to go forth and find food for our spiritual life. Ah, but have you all received spiritual life? Some of you, it may be, are dead while you live, without God, and without Christ. May the Lord quicken you by his life-giving Spirit!

But if you have spiritual life, you must feed it, and *God will give you manna from heaven*, that is, Christ himself, with which to feed your soul. He is that Bread of life which came down from heaven, and you must feed on him. Take care that you go diligently to work to get this spiritual food. The Israelites were up betimes to gather the manna which fell morning by morning. Be not idlers with the Word of God; search it. Get up early in the morning to read your Bible if you cannot do it at other times. Steal from your sleep a happy hour to read the Scriptures. Diligently and earnestly seek the Lord, for he has said, "They that seek me early shall find me."

Then, as I hinted in the reading, *the manna was always encased in dew*. They took care to gather this, for then it became sweet dew to them. May the Word of the Lord always have a dew upon it to you! The critic takes God's Word, and he treats it as the sun did the manna. He pours a dry heat upon it, and it evaporates, and it is gone. Oh, those critics! What a mass of manna they have evaporated altogether!

But the child of God takes care that he loses nothing of what God has revealed. Every word is precious to him; ay, every jot and tittle; and under the bedewing influences of the Holy Spirit he gathers Christ fresh constantly, ever new; and he finds his flesh to be meat indeed, and his blood to be drink indeed!

Again, *the manna was to be sought continually.* So must your spiritual food. Do not try to live on last year's manna. Stale experiences are poor food. I know no dish that is worse than cold experience; you need to have a daily realization of the things of God. Hourly feed on Christ; for the food of years past will be of small account to you. Continually go about the meadows and feed, ye sheep of the Lord; go again and again to the still waters, drink and be satisfied.

In the case of this manna, *the gatherers were pleased with littles.* It was a small, round thing, like coriander seed, or like the hoar-frost. So be very thankful to get a little bit out of God's Word. If you only find one new thought, one fresh idea, pick it up, and put it into the omer. A great many of these precious little things will make rare food for a hungry spirit. Get the food for your soul little by little.

You can imagine how they probably had to gather it. I suppose that *they went down on their knees to get it*, for it was always down low, just on the hoar-frost that lay on the desert sand. See them all stooping down to gather it up; and the bulk of them, I think, were on their knees gathering it. That is the way to get the heavenly food, gather it on your knees, stoop low with humility, bend to the very ground in prayerfulness, and so gather up the coriander seed; nay, I mean the heavenly manna, and go your way rejoicing.

And *it was always for immediate consumption.* Whenever you get a divine promise, go and pray over it, and use it at once. Whenever you see a duty, do it. Do not leave one single part of God's Word to lie void. If anything in the Word of God is impressed upon your mind, let it get into your very soul, and let it be carried out in your practice. Eat the manna as soon as you get it, and use to God's glory the strength derived from it.

Lastly, like the Israelites, *sometimes you will get double supplies.* There is a difference between us and the children of Israel, for we generally get a double supply on the Sabbath. Oh, how we ought to thank God for our Sabbaths, when the Lord is with us, or when he makes the manna to lie on the dew, and we come up to his house, and go away with our omers full! Happy Sabbaths! They become the marked days of the week, and we go from Sunday to Monday, and Monday to Thursday, and Thursday to Sunday again, thanking God that still the heavenly bread comes down to meet our rising prayers and thanksgivings.

God bless you, dear friends! May he make his Word sweeter to us every day we live! May we have good appetites to feed on it!

As for you who have never known the flavour of the heavenly food, I say again, as I said a few minutes ago, may the Lord quicken you by his own life-giving Spirit, for Jesus' sake! Amen!

Expositions by C. H. Spurgeon.

EXODUS XVI. 1—5, 11—36; AND NUMBERS XI. 1—10.

Exodus xvi. Verses 1, 2. *And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness:*

They have been only about six weeks in the wilderness, and already they are up in arms against their leaders. Remember that we have the same kind of people to deal with as Moses and Aaron had. The children of Israel were no better than any other nation; and I do not think they were any worse. We may take them as a fair average of human nature, which is a discontented, rebellious thing in the best of circumstances.

3. *And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.*

They forgot all about the brick-making, and the whips, and the iron bondage, and they recollected nothing but the flesh pots of Egypt. Ah, me! how soon, when we escape from a great trial, we forget it! The present much smaller one seems far heavier than that which is past.

4. *Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.*

See God's answer to man's murmuring. They send up their complaint, and he promises to rain bread down from above. It is a blessed story on God's part all along; a rain of mercy for a smoke of complaining.

5. *And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.*

Now let us read at the eleventh verse.

11, 12. *And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel:*

"I have heard them." God always does hear. Oh, his wonderful patience! If he took no notice of the murmurers, or punished them for their wickedness, we should have no cause for wonder; but he is long-suffering, even to those who do not deserve his pity.

12. *Speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.*

"There shall be no mistake about who I am. I will work this miracle in such a Godlike style, and on such a divine scale, that ye shall know that I am Jehovah your God."

13—16. *And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat. This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man,*

About two pints and a half, I think; according to some calculations, two quarts, or thereabouts. There would be more sustenance in it than in a half-quartern loaf of bread *per diem*: "An omer for every man."

16—18. *According to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents. And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.*

God meant it to be so; not every man according to his avarice, that he might save any of it; but "every man according to his eating." God took care that neither should feebleness be stinted, nor should greed have any excess.

19—22. *And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted. And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.*

He had told them that it would be so, but they evidently did not accept the message that he had delivered to them as the very Word of Jehovah their God; so that, when it was fulfilled, it struck them with wonder, and they "came and told Moses."

23. *And he said unto them, This is that which the* LORD *hath said,*

How often could that answer be made to us! God hears our prayer, and we run and say, "What a wonderful thing! God has heard my prayer." "This is that which the Lord hath said." Is it a strange thing that what Jehovah has said is proved to be true, and is it a subject for surprise that he should keep his promise? You dishonour God when you talk after this fashion.

23. *To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the* LORD*:*

And yet the Sabbath had not been instituted according to law, which proves that its foundation lay deeper and earlier than the promulgation of the Ten Commandments; it is bound up with the essential arrangement of time since the creation: "This is that which the Lord hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord."

23—27. *Bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the* LORD*: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.*

They might have expected it to be so; but they would not believe, and as they would not believe, they must needs put the Word of God to the test. But it endures the trial; it is always true. Oh, that men would, in a believing spirit, test the Word of God, instead of doing it after this sceptical fashion!

28—31. *And the* LORD *said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the* LORD *hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day. And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna:*

Or, "What is it?" It was something too wonderful to be understood; and they kept the expression of their wonderment as the name of their bread from heaven. When they first saw it, they exclaimed, "Man-hu?"

"Man-hu?" "What is it?" "What is it?" Thus it received its Hebrew name, Manna; but God called it, "Bread from heaven."

31—33. *And it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. And Moses said, This is the thing which the* LORD *commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the* LORD, *to be kept for your generations.*

This production, which would not keep a single day under ordinary circumstances, would keep for two days to supply the needs of the Sabbath, and it would keep for generations as a memorial of God's goodness to his chosen people during their forty years' wanderings through the wilderness. We may be quite sure that Aaron would not have kept a stinking thing laid up before the Lord.

34—36. *As the* LORD *commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept. And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited; they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan. Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.*

Now I want you to read in the Book of Numbers. Further on in the history of the children of Israel, when the people had been long in the wilderness, the same kind of thing happened again.

Numbers xi. Verse 1. *And when the people complained, it displeased the* LORD:

Interpreters cannot make out what they had to complain of. The curse of labour had been removed; they did not earn their bread with the sweat of their face, for it fell from heaven every day. They were at no expense for clothing; and though they journeyed, their feet did not swell. I suppose that they complained of the weather. It was too cold; it was too hot; it was too wet; it was too dry. They complained when they stood still; they were much too long in a place. They complained when they marched; they moved too often. In fact, they were very like ourselves; they often complained most when they had least to complain of. Discontent is chronic to our humanity; and I do not believe that the poorest are the most discontented. It is often the very reverse. When a man is put in a place where he has nothing to complain of, especially if he is an Englishman, he feels quite out of place. He must have something to grumble at, something or other to be a grievance, or else he is not happy. "When the people complained, it displeased the Lord."

1. *And the* LORD *heard it; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of the* LORD *burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp.*

He could bear their first murmurings, as they were new to the wilderness, they were hungry, they were thirsty, and the Lord pitied them. But now, when there was no reason for their complaining, his fire in terrible judgment visited his people, on account of their rebellion and murmuring against the goodness of God.

2—4. *And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the* LORD, *the fire was quenched. And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of the* LORD *burnt among them. And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting:*

All evil seems to begin there, among "the mixt multitude", as it does among those church-members who are unconverted, and among those people

who try to hold with the hare and run with the hounds, those who want to be Christians and worldlings, too.

4. *And the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?*

Even the true people of God caught the infection of the scum that was mixed with them, and they fell a-weeping, and said,—

5. *We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick:*

Fine stuff that to recollect! "Why!" say you, "you have read before something very much like that." I am reading another record; but there is no originality in grumbling; it is always the same old thing over again. You might well suppose that I was reading in the Book of Exodus, but I am not; there are many years in between. He who sitteth down with a discontented hand to paint a picture will paint the same picture that he painted before. There is no originality in the murmuring, although they put in a few new touches. Before, it was the flesh pots that they remembered; now, in addition to the flesh, there are these savoury vegetables, "the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick."

6. *But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.*

Here they pour contempt upon the bread of angels, upon the food of heaven, upon the benison of God. Oh, what will men not complain of?

7. *And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.*

A fine white colour, like a pearl.

8. *And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.*

At first they thought it was like wafers made with honey. Getting more used to it, they, perhaps, described it quite as accurately, but not quite so sweetly; they said it was like fresh oil, and there is no better taste than that. Oil, by the time it comes to us, has usually a rank and rancid taste; but in the oil countries it is delicious; and he who has bread and a drop or two of oil, will find himself not ill supplied with a dinner. "The taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil."

9. *And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.*

God took care to preserve his precious gift, encasing each single particle of it within a drop of dew, which gave it freshness. And when truth comes to us encased in the dew of the Spirit, how sweet is its taste! May it be so to us whenever we feed on Christ!

10. *Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the* LORD *was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.*

And no wonder; meek man as he was, they vexed his gracious spirit by their perpetual murmurings.

As we read this sad story, let us, as in a glass, see ourselves; and let us deeply repent of our murmuring and complaining, and henceforth sing—

"I will praise thee every day!
Now thine anger's turn'd away."

Perhaps our next hymn (Number 697) will help us that way.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—676, 697, 703.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE WHOLE BAND AGAINST CHRIST.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 5TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 15th, 1889.

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers."—Matthew xxvii. 27.

I HAVE not observed that anyone has turned to account the fact that "the whole band of soldiers" gathered in the Prætorium, or common hall, for the purpose of mocking our Lord. That they did mock him, has often been noticed, and preached upon; but that they should have gathered unto him the whole cohort, that all should have been there, is mentioned both by Matthew and by Mark, and this being twice recorded cannot have been without some meaning and some lesson for us.

To begin then, our blessed Lord, being condemned to die, was given over to the brutal soldiery who garrisoned Jerusalem. They lived in quarters round about the palace of the governor; and when the Saviour was delivered to them to be put to death, they must needs make him the centre of their mockery and derision before they executed the terrible sentence upon him. Does it not strike you that any man condemned to die ought to be protected against such usage as that? If he must die, some respect should be paid to one who is about to endure the death-penalty. I think that there should be great indulgence shown in such a case; at any rate, nothing should be done or said to hurt the feelings, or to wound the sensibilities. Pity seems to say, "If the man must die, then so be it; but let us not for a single moment jest at him. Far hence be mirth; that is a brutality not to be thought of at such a time as this; and to make a man, about to die, the subject of scorn, is a superfluity of cruelty and wickedness." Methinks that even a devil might be ashamed of such savagery as this. But there was no law to protect the Saviour from these soldiers. Every man's heart seems to have been steeled against him; the common dictates of the most ignorant humanity appear to have been violated. They said by their actions, if not in words, "He shall not only die, but he shall be stripped of all his honour; he shall be robbed

of every comfort; he shall become the butt and target of all the cruel arrows of contempt that we can shoot at him."

Still, why is it said that, in order to make him the object of derision, they gathered together "the whole band"? I do not know how many soldiers constituted the garrison, or how many were barracked round about the governor's palace; but they gathered together "the whole band"; not merely a few of them who were on duty that day, but all were summoned to make a mock of Christ. It was not because he needed to be guarded lest he should escape, for he had no desire to be set free. It was not because the soldiers would be wanted to keep him securely lest the people should attempt to rescue him, for the Jews did not want him to be rescued. On the contrary, it was by their clamour that he was doomed to die. They had cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" He had no friends to stand up for him, no band of disciples to come and force the soldiery away, and set him free. Therefore these legionaries did not guard him with the whole strength of the band on that account.

Nor were they all wanted to execute the death-sentence. With a people eager for his death, four soldiers, a single quaternion, sufficed. He carried his own cross, and they had but to drive the nails into his hands and feet, and fasten him to the tree. That could be soon done to a Victim so defenceless, so inoffensive; it did not need that they should gather together "the whole band", and so we are told it, as a remarkable circumstance which did not rise necessarily out of the narrative. It must have a meaning of its own, "They gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers."

I shall speak thus upon it. First, it would appear that *the soldiers were unanimous in mocking their Prisoner;* secondly, *so are men united in opposing Christ;* and, thirdly, *what shall we say of both the facts whereof we are to speak to-night?*

I. First, then, it is clear that THE SOLDIERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN MOCKING THEIR PRISONER.

Upon this, I remark, first, that *men are very apt to go together when they go wrong.* You notice, in a workshop, how the religion of Christ will be despised, and how certain men will lead the way in uttering calumnies against it, and then the rest will follow. When men go astray, they are like a flock of sheep; one gets through the hedge, and all the rest go after it. We have heard of one sheep leaping the parapet of a bridge into a river, and the whole flock went after it, and all were destroyed. Men are such curious beings, not only the creatures of their own habits, but the imitators of other men's example. I know not how it is, but persons who, alone and apart, would seem to have some good inclinations, will shake them all off when they get into evil company. At home, they will talk reasonably; but, in the crowd, they speak madly. At home and alone, they are amenable to rebuke and conviction; but when they get with other men, they will not hear a word of it; they shut their ears to anything like good teaching, and they run greedily to do mischief. I do not, therefore, so much wonder that, when our Lord was given over to the soldiers, they gathered together the whole band, for it is so usual for men to go together when they go wrong.

Frequently, too, it will happen that *there is not one man to bear his protest.* Would you not have expected that, in a large band of soldiers, there would have been at least one man of noble spirit, who would have said, "Nay, do not torture him; he is about to die"? Would it have been at all wonderful if one man had stood forward, and said, "This Man has done nothing amiss; our governor has said that he finds no fault in him. Why, therefore, do you set him in that chair, and robe him, and bow the knee in mockery, and spit upon him?" It would not have been very surprising if there had been amongst the Roman soldiery some one or two who had espoused Christ's cause; for, truth to tell, those valiant men, although they grew brutalized by living amidst scenes of blood, were capable of deeds of high virtue. One has but to read the old Roman story, to stand amazed sometimes that such fair flowers of virtue and benevolence could grow on such a dunghill as the Roman State then was. Yet you see that not one out of the whole band of soldiery would say a word for Christ, or absent himself from the ring, when their comrades mocked him.

Peradventure, I address some men here who work together, and who are in the habit of scoffing at the cross of Christ. I hope that there is not a workshop in London without one man, at least, who will stand forward, and defend his Master's cause; but if I speak to one to whom that thought has occurred, and yet he has said, "I dare not; I should be myself the subject of so much persecution, that I could not stand forth alone;" now, listen, sir, if a Caius, or a Fabius, or a Julius, had stood forth alone to defend the Lord's cause, we should have had his name here, and if he had even suffered death for it, he would have been amongst the brightest of the martyr host. And you know not what honour you lose if you conceal your testimony. If you allow the whole drift of the talk to be infidel and atheistic, and never put in your good word for him whom you call Master and Lord, you dishonour yourself; but if you could have the courage, and I hope that you may, to say, "He, of whom you speak thus ill, has saved my soul, snatched me from habits of vice, and renewed my character," if you could stand forward, and bear such testimony for him, I wot that it were a short road to glory, and honour, and immortality. It is not likely that you would have to suffer as the martyrs did; but suppose that you did, the more of suffering, the brighter that ruby crown which would be set upon your head in the day of your Lord's appearing. I hope that Christian men are still made of that grand old stuff which defied the Roman emperors, and made them weary of slaughter, for they could not mow down the crops of the Church so fast as they grew. The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church; and the more copiously it was shed, the more the Church multiplied.

But, once more, *the number of those who thus mocked Christ made their conduct all the baser.* When you, young fellow, get in with fifty more, and in the workshop you mock at some solitary Christian youth, when you each one have your jibe, when you give him what you call "chaff", which is sport to you, but cruel enough to be death to him, did it never occur to you that it was a most cowardly thing, and altogether unworthy of you, that ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, should all set upon one? What if a man does believe in religion? Has he

not a right to do so if he likes? Some of you who talk so much about freedom are the biggest bullies in the world; you boast loudly of religious liberty, but to you it means liberty to be irreligious. Surely I have as much right to worship Christ as you have to despise him; and if my views of religion should seem to you to be peculiar, yet, if peculiar, have I not as good reason to hold them as you have to reject them? I speak thus plainly because I know of many, many cases where, if men were men at all, they would cease to persecute Christians, seeing that they persecute one or two wherever they can if they themselves happen to be in the majority. Think of this lot of howling dogs around this one gentle Lamb of God, the Christ who had never even a hard word for them, whose mightiest weapon was silence and patience; think of him surrounded by all these men of war from their youth up, these Roman legionaries with their imperial eagles. It was a cruel shame. The more there were of them, the meaner it was of them thus, as a whole band, to gather together to mock the Saviour.

But I suppose that *their number accounted for the excess to which they went.* If there had only been two or three of them, they would not have thought of all the cruel things that they did to our Lord. To put an old cloak upon him, and to call him the purpled Cæsar, is commonplace enough; but one cries, "Let us make a crown for him," and they plait the thorns with cruel hands, piercing his temples with the sharp spines. Another says, "Fetch a sceptre, and put it in his hand. Set him in that chair, and let us bow before him, let us cry, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" They would have stopped at that point had there not been so many of them; but, being so large a band, one coarse fellow must go further still, and he spits into that blessed face!

> "See how the patient Jesus stands,
> Insulted in his lowest case!
> Sinners have bound the Almighty hands,
> And spit in their Creator's face."

I hardly think that one, two, three, or even half-a-dozen by themselves could have been guilty of such detestable, loathsome conduct to Christ; but the whole band being together, they thought of fresh insults.

Take heed of sinning in a crowd. Young man, abandon the idea that you may sin in a crowd. Beware of the notion that, because many do it, it is less a guilt to any one of them. Remember that the broad way always was the wrong road, and that it leads to destruction none the less because many walk in it. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Though you finish up the day's work of sin with three cheers for your noble selves, you shall find yourselves arraigned each one before the judgment-seat of God, each one to give account for the deeds done in his body according to what he hath done, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Oh, the pitiful story, a whole company of soldiers united against Christ, with not one to quit the ranks, and say, "No, comrades; do not so;" but all wallowing in their cruelty, like swine in the mire!

II. That leads me to talk to you, secondly, about another point. As these soldiers were unanimous in mocking their illustrious Prisoner, SO ARE MEN UNITED IN OPPOSING CHRIST.

Like these soldiers, *many do not pass Christ by with neglect.* I should

have thought that many a brave man of that Roman legion would have said, "Pshaw! I shall not go to taunt the poor Jew who has been hunted down by the priests. Nobody gives him a good word; even his own followers have fled from him. I heard one of them declare that he did not know him, though I knew that man was a liar, for I saw him in the garden with his Master. My comrades are going to the Prætorium to mock him, but I shall not go; such mirth is unworthy of a man, especially of a Roman." Instead thereof, they were all there. Curiosity fetched them up, they must all come to see this Man of whom they had heard so much; and an evil conscience made them bitter against him, for, because they were evil, his being good was a protest against their wicked deeds.

So they were all united against him, and *they came up, every one of them, to show their scorn.* It is a strange thing; but if Christ is fully preached, somehow men cannot be indifferent to him. If they can be right away, and never hear of him, they may be indifferent; but the true gospel either offends men, or else it charms them. I believe that you may preach a certain sort of gospel, from the first of January to the end of December, and everybody will say, "Yes, that is very good, very, very good, perfectly harmless." Yes, a chip in the porridge, with no flavour in it; but if it is the real out-and-out gospel of a crucified Saviour, there will be someone who will say, "Ah, that is what I want! I like that;" but there will be others who will grind their teeth, and say, "I will never hear that man again; I cannot bear his talk; I hate it." Do not be surprised when I say that, if I hear that So-and-so was very angry at one of my sermons, I state as my belief, "That man will go to heaven. I have the hook in that fish, and I shall catch him yet." But when I hear people simply say, "Oh, yes; we heard the sermon!" and they make some trifling remark about it, and go their way, nothing good comes of it. It is better that a man should be in a downright rage against Christ than be utterly indifferent to him; and where he really comes so that men are obliged to see him, they cannot long be indifferent. "That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," is one of the objects of his death. The cross of Christ is the great detector of men. Fix it up, and men straightway go to the right or to the left of it. It is the parter and divider of the ways. Jesus himself said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Men cannot pass by utterly with neglect after once hearing the story of the cross. They must gather up for Christ or against him, and alas! many of them do gather up to pour their scorn upon him.

Many ungodly men *feel an inward contempt for Christ's claims.* "No," says one, "I have no such contempt for Christ." I would not wish to charge you wrongfully; but if you are not a believer in him, if you have never accepted him to be your Saviour and your Lord, I venture to repeat the charge, you have an inward contempt for his claims, my hearers. Whether you are Christians or not, you are the subjects of King Jesus. God has put you into his hand, and you will have to stand before his judgment-seat at the last. The Man Christ Jesus, who died on Calvary, and rose again, and went to heaven, will judge every one of you at the last great day; and he claims that you now should

become his servants, and yield obedience to him. Now, I know that you will say in your hearts, "We shall not do anything of the kind." Just so, and have I not proved what I said? "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and that carnal mind may be in a man who always goes to church, or to chapel. If he has not been renewed, he does not believe in Christ as King; and as far as his heart is concerned, he mocks at the idea of his being a servant of Christ, and Christ being Lord over him. In his very soul he thinks this to be a preposterous claim, that he should be obedient to Christ in everything. Besides, the mass of men do not seek to know what Christ's claims are. They are ignorant of his royalty and sovereignty, and it is in this way that their minds are filled with an indistinctly-expressed, but still very powerful, contempt for him.

And so it happens, in the next place, that *men invent different ways of showing their derision.* It is very curious that you find very learned men opposed to Christ, and they go to work usually by destructive criticism, trying to get rid of this part of the Bible and that; but an ignorant man cannot do that, so he says that he does not believe in the Bible at all. Here you find a rich man despising Christ, sneering at "the common people", as he calls Christ's followers, and there you see another man, who is very poor, despising Christ by wishing to overthrow all the rules of his sacred kingdom. Herod and Pilate hate one another till Christ comes, and then they join together in reviling him.

These Roman soldiers, having all come together, found employment in mocking Christ. First, some of them stripped him. Oh, have I not seen men at it in these days, stripping Christ of his Deity, stripping him of his priesthood, stripping him of his sovereignty, stripping him of his righteousness, stripping Christ of everything that makes him Christ? Is not that the way with many of the rich, and the great, and the "advanced" theologians of the present day? They show their hatred of Christ by stripping him.

There are others who go to work the other way; they put on him a scarlet robe. I have seen them do it; put other men's garments upon him, make him out to be what he never was, travesty the doctrines of grace, caricature the gospel, and hold it all up to contempt, imputing to Christ the faults of all his followers, and even laying at his door the sin of men who, like Judas, have betrayed him. That is another method of showing enmity to Christ.

Then we see all around us men who mock at Christ's royalty. They crown him with a crown of thorns by their harsh speeches against his people. By their persecutions of those who love him, Christ is often crowned again with thorns. The husband has done it in his unkindness to his believing wife; parents have done it in their objection to their children following Christ; the man or woman who has given the cold shoulder to a pious friend has thus put another crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head. And have we not seen them put the reed into his hand by representing Christ as being a mere myth, and his doctrine as a dream, a holy fancy, a proper thing to keep the people quiet, but with no matter of fact or truth in it? So they put into his hand the reed-sceptre to mock him, and he regards it as mockery.

And thus, around the Christ to-day, I seem to see, with eyes closed, but by the vision of faith, a multitude kneeling before him, and pretending to worship him, hypocritical worshippers, those who even by their bedsides are hypocrites, repeating a form of prayer, and yet never really praying, drawing near to him with their lips, while their hearts are far from him. Oh, how do sinners thus prove their unanimity of enmity to Christ! Even in their pretended worship, they do but show the opposition of their hearts to him.

Here and there, also, I see one coarser than other men, who spits upon Jesus, and smites him. You cannot live long in London without hearing from men who are opposed to the cross of Christ expressions that disgust you. I have given up all idea now that we are living in a Christian country. Believers, in England, are a band of Christ's soldiers who are holding the fort against deadly odds. Ours is a heathen country, with an admixture of Christian people, and a smear, a varnish, of pretended religion, but a heathen country still. And every now and then, some outspoken heathen, by his awful profanity, makes us wish that we could not hear at all. This is how they spit on Christ. One does it very politely with a bow; another comes forward, and abuses both the Christ and his cross. He has spat in his face, and honestly let us know where he stands. One will undermine the truth; another brings the battering ram, in open day, to beat down the citadel; but they are so united together that, with one accord, the whole band of soldiers is gathered against Christ.

Dear friends, if men attacked any one doctrine, you would find only one band of men opposing it; but when Christ himself is the object of mockery, the whole band gathers round him. If I preach some of the doctrines of Calvinism, I shall find men, who are fatalists, and necessitarians, and the like, who will agree with me; but if I preach the whole gospel of Christ, these very men, who might have been my friends under one form of doctrine, will be my enemies against the whole of it. Only let Jesus appear, and Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, until they are renewed by grace, count his cross to be a stumbling-block and his doctrine to be foolishness.

Now notice that *men who could mock Christ like this were capable of doing anything evil.* If they could revile Christ, it was no wonder that they cast lots for his vesture just at his feet when he hung on the cross. I am often astounded at things that I read about gamblers, and what they have been known to do. It is fifty years ago since there was a story told by a policeman, and I do not doubt its truth, of two men at Hampstead who, having bet with one another all that they had, at last had a wager as to which should hang the other, and one of them did hang the other. The policeman came along just in time to save him; and when the man was cut down, what do you think he said? Why, he said that he would have hung the other man, if he could, to win the bet! That was thought to be very extraordinary; but it is not so very long ago since, at the laying of the first stone of a chapel, a friend of mine stood behind two gentlemen from Newmarket; and when one whom I know stood up to pray over the first stone, these two made a bet about how long he would be praying! Men will do anything for a wager. That mischievous vice, which is becoming

so common nowadays, leads to an extraordinary hardness of heart beyond anything else; and I cannot so much wonder that men, who were brought up as these Roman soldiers were, were capable of mockery of Christ, and of anything else that was evil.

III. I have finished when I have asked and answered this question, WHAT SHALL WE SAY OF BOTH THE FACTS WHEREOF WE HAVE SPOKEN TO-NIGHT?

These cruel soldiers unanimously came together to see Christ as a prisoner, and to put him to extraordinary scorn; yet *out of this band Christ found witnesses.* Their chief officer, "the centurion, and they that were with him," as they stood and saw Christ die, said, "Truly this was the Son of God"; and some of these soldiers, being appointed to watch the tomb of Christ, came and declared that he had risen from the dead. They were fine witnesses, were they not? men who were too rough to lie to help a sect. They came forward to bear testimony to the Christ. O God, if there be any here who have blasphemed thee, who have cursed Christ to his face, who have persecuted Christ's people, save them to-night, and make them witnesses of thy power to bless! When such a man gets saved, he is a good witness for Christ. He says, "I know what Christ can do, for he has changed my heart, he has appeared to me by the way, and manifested himself to me; and I know and am sure of that which I testify, that verily this is the Son of God."

Next, learn another lesson. *All this mockery should rebuke the backwardness among Christ's friends.* When he was to be mocked, all the soldiers came up. Some of them were down in the canteen, but they left their wine, and came up to mock him. Some of the soldiery, perhaps, had furlough for that day; but they gave up their holiday to go to mock Christ. Now, then, brethren and sisters, if his enemies could gather together the whole band against him, let us gather together the whole band for him. Why, just look at some of you on the Lord's-day! There are a few drops of rain, that might spoil your best bonnets, or wet your new clothes, so you cannot go to chapel. You would have gone to market, you know, rain or shine. How many there are who will not be able to come to the prayer-meeting to-morrow night! One pleaded, some time ago, at the prayer-meeting, "Lord, bless those that are at home on beds of sickness!" "Yes," said the preacher, "and, Lord, bless those that are at home on sofas of wellness!" There are plenty of that kind, who stay at home because they have not enough of the hearty spirit that ought to be in them to let the whole band gather together to confess Christ. Do you love Jesus Christ, my dear sister? Then, come and confess it. Do you love Jesus Christ, my brother? Then out with your avowal of it. Do not try to go to heaven behind the hedges. Get into the King's high road, and travel in broad daylight as a soldier of Christ should. Say,—

> "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
> Or to defend his cause."

Next, I think that *these mockers chide the uninventiveness of many Christians.* See how they brought out the old red cloak, and plaited the crown of thorns, and cried, "Put them on him." Then they

brought the sceptre of reed, saying, "Stick it in his hand, and shout, 'Hail, King of the Jews!'" Then came the spitting and the smiting; they could not have made the mockery more complete. They soon rigged up all that mimicry of royalty. Come, then, brethren and sisters, let us be inventive in honouring Christ.

"Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him Lord of all."

See, is there not some new plan to be tried, some method that you have not yet attempted by which you could make Jesus loved and honoured in the soul of somebody, be it only a poor child, a servant girl, or the humblest man in the street? Surely, if enmity was so quick to deride him, love ought to be equally alert and inventive to find out ways by which to honour him.

But, once more, *all this mockery should excite our admiration of our patient Lord.* Remember that, as he sat there, flouted and made a jest of, he might with one glance of his eyes have flashed hell into their souls, and slain every one of them. Had he only opened those lips, he could have spoken thunderbolts that would have destroyed them at once; but he sat there, and patiently bore it all. As a sheep before her shearers, he was dumb; he opened not his mouth, because he was bearing all this to save you and to save me. Blessed Saviour! Oh, come, let us worship and adore and love him!

The last lesson is, *let us summon all our faculties to honour Christ to-night.* Gather together the whole band, your memory of all his goodness, your judgment of all his greatness, all your hopes, and all your fears, your quieted conscience, your soul at rest, come, and with the whole band of faculties that God has given you, from the highest to the lowest, bow down in grateful adoration before him who bowed so low that he might lift us up to be with him for ever.

Dear hearers, are you trusting Christ? There is no other trust that will do for a soul for time and for eternity. On a dying bed, it must be none but Jesus; let it be none but Jesus on your bed to-night before you fall asleep. Do not dare to close your eyes till you have committed your soul into the keeping of him who holds out his hands still, as he did upon the cross, that he may receive you with open arms, and save you with an everlasting salvation. Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—282, 299, 267.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW XXVII. 22—50.

Our Lord was brought before the Roman governor Pilate. He was anxious to let Jesus go; but he was a weak-minded man, easily swayed by the noisy cry of the people, prompted by the chief priests and elders.

Verses 22, 23. *Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.*

A blind, unreasoning hate had taken possession of the people. They gave no answer to Pilate's wondering enquiry, "Why, what evil hath he done?"

for he had done nothing amiss; they only repeated the brutal demand, "Let him be crucified! Let him be crucified!" The world's hatred of Christ is shown in similar fashion to-day. He has done no evil, no one has suffered harm at his hands, all unite to pronounce him innocent; and yet they practically say, "Away with him! Crucify him!"

24. *When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.*

Ah, Pilate, you cannot rid yourself of responsibility by that farce! He who has power to prevent a wrong is guilty of the act if he permits others to do it, even though he does not actually commit it himself. If you are placed in positions of power and responsibility, do not dream that you can escape from guilt by merely allowing other people to do what you would not do yourself.

25. *Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.*

All the people willingly took upon themselves the guilt of the murder of our dear Lord: "His blood be on us, and on our children." This fearful imprecation must have been remembered by many when the soldiers of Titus spared neither age nor sex, and the Jewish capital became the veritable Aceldama, the field of blood.

26. *Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.*

Why scourge him before delivering him up to be crucified? Surely this was a superfluity of cruelty. The Roman scourging was something which I scarcely care to describe, one of the most terrible punishments to which anyone could be subjected; yet Pilate first scourged Jesus, and then gave him up to die by crucifixion.

27, 28. *Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.*

Some old soldier's coat, that they found lying about, they cast upon Christ in imitation of the royal robes of Cæsar or Herod.

29—31. *And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.*

By that fact, though they did not intend it, our Lord was recognized in the street as the same Person who had been taken into the Prætorium by the soldiers. Had Jesus been brought forth in the scarlet robe, persons looking at him might not have known him to be the same Man who wore the garment woven from the top throughout; but in his own seamless raiment, they readily recognized the Nazarene.

32. *And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.*

I wonder if he was a black man. There was a Simon in the early Church; and it certainly was the lot of the Ethiopian to bear the cross for many and many an age. This Simon was a stranger, anyhow, and a foreigner; truly honoured was he to be compelled to bear the cross after Christ.

33. *And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,*

From its shape. There appears to be to this day a hill still in the form

of a human skull outside the gate of Jerusalem. When they came to that common place of execution, the Tyburn or Old Bailey of the city,—

34. *They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.*

A stupefying draught was given to the condemned; that is the only mercy that there was about the whole thing. The Romans did give to the crucified a draught of myrrh to take away something of the agony of crucifixion; but our Lord came not to be stupefied, he came to suffer, therefore he would not take anything that would at all impair his faculties. He drank even to the dregs the bitter cup of grief and woe.

35. *And they crucified him,*

Horrible scene, to see those blessed hands and feet pierced with nails, and fastened to the cross!

35. *And parted his garments, casting lots:*

Rattling the dice-box at the foot of the cross! Gambling is the most hardening of all vices. I believe that crimes have been committed by persons, under the influence of gambling, which never could have been committed by them in any other condition of mind: "They parted his garments, casting lots." See here, ye gamblers! With Christ's blood bespattering them, these soldiers dared still to raffle for his robe.

35, 36. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched him there;*

His enemies gloating their cruel eyes with the sight of his sufferings; his friends with many tears watching his amazing griefs. It is for us, to-night, with humble faith and grateful love, to mark the incidents connected with his painful death.

37, 38. *And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.*

Giving him the place of honour, which means in this case the place of dishonour. He was the apex of that terrible triangle.

39, 40. *And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.*

This is the cry of the Socinians to-day, "Come down from the cross. Give up the atoning sacrifice, and we will be Christians." But, by rejecting his vicarious atonement, they practically un-Christ the Christ, as those mockers at Golgotha did.

41, 42. *Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.*

Just so. Get rid of a crucified Saviour, then they will believe in Him. Atonement, substitution, vicarious sacrifice, this staggers them. They will have Christ if they can have him without his cross.

43—46. *He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Every word in this terrible cry from the cross is emphatic; every syllable cuts and pierces to the heart.

47. *Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.*

They knew better, yet they jested at the Saviour's prayer

48. *And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge,*

It always seems to me very remarkable that the sponge, which is the very lowest form of animal life, should have been brought into contact with Christ, who is at the top of all life. In his death, the whole circle of creation was completed.

48—50. *And filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

Christ's strength was not exhausted; his last word was uttered "with a loud voice", like the shout of a conquering warrior. He need not have died on account of any infirmity in himself; but voluntarily, for your sake and mine, he "yielded up the ghost." Blessed be his holy name!

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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OUR SERVICE FOR CHRIST NEVER FINISHED.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, September 19th, 1889.

"But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."—Luke xvii. 7—10.

THESE words are not addressed to the general congregation. You notice that the chapter begins, "Then said he unto the disciples." Even they felt as if Christ's words were too heavy for them, and so, when you get to the fifth verse, you read, "And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith," as if only the very strongest of them were able to receive his teaching just then; he was describing such difficult duties, and prescribing so peculiar a path. Mark you: he was not laying down the way of salvation, but pointing out a path of service for those who were already saved. We must be saved first, and must serve afterwards. To hope to serve Christ so as to win salvation, is a fallacy, a delusion of our proud hearts; but to be saved by his grace as a matter of pure favour, and then afterwards to serve him, having gratitude for our great motive, is the right order, and a very different thing from self-righteousness. It is to disciples, then, that the words about which I speak to-night are addressed.

We must not start back at the sight of the service which is required of us. It is our highest honour that we are allowed to be the servants of our Saviour; and being servants, unless we are so only nominally, and not really, we must not be offended at anything that is demanded of us. We must try to fill up the word servant, and show the world what a servant can be. It is the duty of every Christian to turn each common silver word into a golden one. Whatever "husband", or "father", or "son", may mean in reference to ordinary society, it

must mean something more when it gets into the Church of God. We must fulfil it, we must fill it full; we must make something more of it than it used to be. So with regard to servants. If we are servants of Christ, let us be servants, as the mathematicians say, to the *n*th, to the very highest possible degree. Let us elevate and enlarge our calling till, if men want to know what a servant is, they will only have to ask Christ, our Master, and he will point to us, and say, "These are the kind of servants that my love and my grace can produce. Money could not buy such; and no rate of wages could secure such service as they are prepared freely to render."

With those two thoughts on your minds, that, being saved, you are servants, and being servants, it is your intense desire to make that word mean all it possibly can mean, follow me while I try to bring out the teaching of the passage before us.

I. First, WE ARE, ADMITTEDLY, THE SERVANTS OF CHRIST.

If the word *doulos* here be interpreted "slave", as it certainly might be, we are quite willing to be known as the bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we have no objection even to be branded with the slave-mark; and with him we dare even to say, "From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

We are the servants, the slaves of Christ, and we rejoice to be so, because in this lies *our deliverance from the bondage of sin*. No man can really be his own master; he will serve either one lord or another. We are such dependent creatures that we must give ourselves up to be either the servants of sin, or the servants of righteousness. We were once the servants of sin; we were "children of wrath, even as others." We found ourselves born into hereditary bondage, which we also freely chose, for the iron entered into our will, and our will chose the bondage of evil passions and corrupt desires. One way or another, though each of us differently, we resolved to be the servants and the serfs of the prince of darkness, that evil one who still rules over the children of disobedience. Now that we have become the servants of Christ, we are freed from the bondage of sin; his service is our freedom. There was no other method of setting us free from the bondage of the black prince than that of bringing us under a divine and blessed servitude to Immanuel, the Prince of holiness and peace. We therefore rejoice in being his servants, because it means deliverance from an older servitude, even the service of sin and Satan.

Our being Christ's servants is *the absolute result of redemption*. We are bought with a price; therefore we are not our own. Standing on Calvary, and gazing with wonder at those purple founts whence flow our salvation and eternal life, we feel that "if One died for all, then all died," and that, inasmuch as Jesus Christ there bought us with his precious blood, we are his inalienable property, and belong to him, body, soul, and spirit, for ever. Such a price, paid by such an One, in the midst of such circumstances of shame and derision, binds us as his for ever and ever. We do not want to be our own; our purchase by Christ is our delight, and we willingly yield ourselves up to him who has paid for us a price infinitely more than we could ever be conceived to be worth. Hence our service is founded upon our

deliverance from the bondage of sin, and it is also the direct result of our redemption by the blood of Christ.

Moreover, as you sang just now, you helped me to another point, *we are Christ's by our own pledge.* You remember your declaration,—

> " 'Tis done ! the great transaction's done;
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

You added to that the further resolve,—

> " High heaven, that heard the solemn vow,
> That vow renew'd shall daily hear:
> Till in life's latest hour I bow,
> And bless in death a bond so dear."

If we were not Christ's to-night, we would not rest an hour until we were. We wish to be his, we wish to be perfectly his ; our prayer is that even every thought may be brought into captivity to him. Our soul pines after the perfect liberty of complete subjection to the will of God in Christ Jesus. Is it not so, brethren ? Have you not lifted your hand to heaven so that you cannot go back ? And what is more, has not every desire to go back ceased out of your heart ? If you had been mindful of the place from whence you came out, you might have had abundant opportunity to return ; but you desire something beyond, your motto is, " Onward, upward, homeward, heavenward." You want to get away from the place from whence you came. You belong to Christ ; you confess the impeachment to-night, wondering much that you should have the joy of daring to feel that you belong to Christ. Have you any sweeter hymn in the whole *répertoire* of your heart than this,—

> " Oh ! I am my Beloved's,
> And my Beloved's mine " ?

Do you not sing that in your happiest moments, in the quiet of your spirit ? If so, then you are admittedly the servant of Christ.

We regard this service as *a great gift of the free grace of God.* We look back to the eternal counsels, and we see the Father choosing us in Christ Jesus, and giving us to his dear Son before the foundation of the world. We see our Lord Jesus undertaking, on our behalf, to present us to the Father, faultless, in the day of his appearing ; and it is a great delight to us to feel that it is because God willed it that we are now the property of Christ. God decreed it ; God laid plans for it ; it was in the purpose and covenant of unchangeable grace that we should belong to Christ. In this we rejoice, not as a bondage imposed, but as a grace given. Oh, what would we not have given, years ago, when first we were awakened, if we could have even hoped that we belonged to Christ ? And now that we know that we are his, and none other's, and that he will keep us to the end, it is the highest delight of our spirit. Do not think, dear friends, any of you, that we consider ourselves demeaned by submitting to a very slavery to Christ. We wish to make the bondage as tight as it can possibly be ; we desire not to have any will, or any wish, or even any imagination that would go flying over the divine boundaries of God's will. We would be wholly his ; that is our honour, our crown, God's best gift to us.

More than that, we find that *the service of Christ is its own reward.* What if he never smiled on me? If he would let me serve him, I would count the fact of service to be a smile. If he should drive me from his presence, if he would only let me glorify him, I would be satisfied to make that my heaven. To be completely given up to live for God, and to glorify Christ, what larger happiness could a redeemed creature desire? There is reward enough to us in being permitted to unloose the latchets of his shoes, or to be engaged in his farm-work, as the text says, ploughing, or feeding cattle, so long as it is but done for him.

Besides, *there is a rich reward in store for the righteous*, and we may look for it. We remember how Moses "had respect unto the recompense of the reward;" and without being mercenary, we may anticipate our reward. God will not let his people work for nothing; and though the reward is not of debt, but of grace, yet verily there is a reward for the righteous. In that day when Christ shall come in the glory of his Father, he will award to his saints their several crowns. To those who have been faithful, he will give according to the measure of their faithfulness. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." We count it a high honour, not to be in the civil service, but to be in the divine service. How ardently some young men are looking forward for a place "under government." That is exactly what I have, it is just what every child of God has, a place under divine government. We do not wish for anything better than this. O ye glorified saints, if we may but come among your thrones, or even lie at your feet, we will make no choice, so that we may but see our Lord's face; and, meanwhile, if it shall be our lot to do the scullion's work in Christ's kitchen, we will count it most honourable employment, and we will do it as unto him. This servitude to Christ is to us unutterable freedom. We are never free till Christ binds us. Here I stand to-night, he has bound my heart, and fastened it to himself; he has bound my hands, and they must serve him; he has bound my feet, and they must run in the way of his commands. He has bound my tongue, too. It sometimes speaks amiss, but yet it longs to speak only and wholly for him. My Master, tie my eyes, and my eyelids, too, and bind every filament of my nature, every nerve, and every muscle of my body, and every hair of my head; and let me be wholly thine, in absolute bondage unto thee, and then shall I cry, "O God, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds." We never have our bonds loosed until, like the psalmist, we can twice over mark the absolute servitude to himself into which Christ has brought us.

That is my first remark on the text, and there is much in it; we are, admittedly, the servants of Christ.

II. Secondly, OUR SERVICE IS NOT FINISHED: "Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?"

Observe, first, that *our service may have been long and arduous.* We may have been ploughing. I speak to some here who have had a very hard bit of ploughing; instead of breaking the soil, you have sometimes thought that you would break the ploughshare; and many a time the bullocks, unaccustomed to the yoke, have been very difficult

to drive; and some of them that are accustomed to the yoke, have taken to kicking every now and then. You have not found ploughing to be playing, I am sure; no ploughman ever does. He finds that it is tough work. He earns his living well who earns it by his ploughing; and if some of the gentlemen in London, who quarrel with their wages, had to do a ploughman's work, and to get a ploughman's wage, I warrant you that they would think themselves better off at the work they have to do now. A good day's ploughing is about as hard a day's toil as a man can have. Well, some of us have been ploughing; for the Master has given us difficulties, he has given us trials, he has given us cares; and we have also had to feed cattle. I cannot say that I have been literally feeding cattle; but I have found it more trouble to feed some of you than I should have had in feeding cattle. I had an old friend, who was forty years a shepherd, and he lived to be eighty years old. During the last forty years of his life, he was a minister; and he said one day, "I have had two flocks; the first forty years I fed sheep, and the second forty years I fed men; and the second flock was a deal more sheepish than the first." I can vouch for the latter part; not that all of you are sheepish, for there are some of you who are easily fed, but there are others who are not. I remember a young brother, who left the church because he said that I never gave him a bit of bone on which he could try his teeth. Well, now, I thought that, if I took out the bone, and gave meat alone, I was doing the best thing possible; but this foolish youth wanted a bit of gristle, not that he could digest it, but he wanted something that he could not digest. I could have given him plenty of that sort of stuff; I had no end of it at home, but I save that for my dogs, and bring the meat for the people I have to feed. You can never please everybody; and there are some people who are like those described in Psalm cvii. I think that David said that they were fools, but I will not say that; and further he says of them, "Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat." There was no feeding them. I would rather feed cattle than feed them. Cattle will eat what you give them, as a general rule; but we have some in our congregations, dear souls, that are afraid to feed on the promises of God, afraid to feed even on the Bread of life. They are not worthy, they say, which is quite true; but then we are not fed according to our worthiness in the covenant of grace. This feeding of cattle, this feeding of men, is not the easiest thing in the world.

The text also teaches that *our service may change its form.* Some of you have been at Sunday-school work; others of you have been at slum work; some have been visiting the lodging-houses; others have stood in the streets, and preached for Christ. You have had a good long day of ploughing and feeding cattle; but your work is not done. Oh, by no means! When the man mentioned by our Lord had been out all day in the field, and then came home, he had just to tidy himself up, and do a little domestic service; for, in the East, the manservant, after ploughing in the field, had to gird his loins, and prepare his master's dinner, and serve at the table, waiting upon his lord. Well, now, dear friends, after a good long day's work, you shall have a change of occupation; but you shall go on working still. You have not finished your service yet. Have you had forty years of it?

Well, that is a long day; but you have not done work yet, there is something else for you to do. If you cannot go out ploughing, you shall go down into the kitchen, and do some cooking; and if you cannot feed the cattle, you shall bring up a dish of food for your Master. This is a change of work for you; but you are to keep on as long as you live. I said, one Sabbath morning, that I feared I might not be able to keep on preaching, meaning that I feared that I should soon be laid aside by illness, which I hope may not now occur; and somebody said that I was not going to preach any more, I was going to retire. I shall "retire" when four men carry me on their shoulders to the grave; but not till then, by God's grace! As long as there is breath in our body, and we are able to say a word for Christ, we certainly shall not give up our service. Nor will any of you, I hope, ever talk about retiring from your Master's work. If any of you young men ever think of doing so, I beg you to remember what came to Jonah when he "retired" from his Master's business; and whales are scarcer now than they were then! You had better go down to Nineveh, and work away in your Master's service as long as you have health and strength. There may be change of service, but no retiring from service.

Next, *the servant came to service which required greater care.* When he was only ploughing, or feeding cattle, he could do that in a rough way, with unwashed hands; but now that he has to wait on his master, do you not see how he smartens himself up, how he has washed his hands and face? He would not be properly waiting on his master if he had any filth on his clothes, or on the plates. And he attends to this service with all his wits about him, he does not fall asleep over it. If the Lord calls you to be his body-servant, to wait upon him in close attendance and high communion with him, if he gives you more to do with the souls of men, more to do with the Church of God, as he may do, promoting you to higher service, yet remember that you are still a servant, and you are to prove that you are still a servant by working with greater care, with more of the spirit of a servant, than you ever had before.

Dear friends, is it not a mercy for us that our service is not ended? Why should it be finished? *Our dependence upon our Master is not ended.* We burn his candles, so we ought to do his work. Every morning's breakfast, and every day's meals are his gifts to us, and the clothes on our back are his livery; should we not, then, continue to serve him? When you can do without Christ, he can do without you. But that will not be "by-and-by." You are always depending upon his daily bounty, therefore be thankful that your service is not ended.

And remember this also. It is a blessed thing that our service is not ended, because it shows that the Lord has pleasure in his servant still. There is a prayer put into verse, that you and I may constantly offer,—

"Dismiss me not thy service, Lord!"

Suppose that he had dismissed us, and said, "Go and sit down to meat, I do not want you any more; I have no poor child for you to nurse, I have not even any more cattle for you to feed, there is not even a lamb among my flock for you to carry in your bosom," that would

show that he did not love us with the love of complacency, or take such delight in us as he once did; but as long as he gives us something to do, we will gratefully do it, because we will take it as a token of his continual delight in us, and that therefore, delighting in us, he gives us something to do for him. That is my second point, our service is not ended.

III. And next, WE DO NOT WISH TO BE TREATED AS IF IT WERE: "Which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat?"

That would show that his service was ended; but we do not wish our Master to treat us so. I mean this, *we do not expect freedom from trial.* Do you? We read of Abraham as being sorely tried and wonderfully prevailing, and then we come upon this text, "And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt (that is, try, or test) Abraham." Yes, and after all your years of service, after you have been honoured in bringing souls to Christ, you will have to be tried still. He will not say, "Go and sit down to meat," but he will bid you gird yourselves, and come and serve him.

Also, dear friends, *we are not to expect honour here.* After many years of preaching the gospel, one might be tempted to say to himself, "I have a name and some esteem among men; I must take care of them." That is a temptation from Satan; throw it all away. Serve thy Lord, and care nothing about thy honour, or thy repute, for it is not for him to say to thee, "Go and sit down to meat." If he still calls thee to do some service for him in the defence or proclamation of his truth, do not ask him to treat thee otherwise.

Then, *we are not to think that we cannot do any more.* Do I speak to any Christian, who has come in here to-night saying, "I really think that I must give up this service, and give up that"? Do no such thing, I pray you; hold on to it as for dear life. Your engagement to your Master is not a five years' service, like that of a soldier, but you are his for life. Yours is a life-long bondage to him, a happy apprenticeship to your Lord and Master throughout the whole term of your natural—nay, of your spiritual life. Say not that you can do no more; there is much yet remaining for you to do. Pick up a new thread, and begin to spin, and he will find you more. Take up a bit of iron you have never tried to fashion, put it in the fire, and see whether you cannot make some fresh instrument therewith. Give yourself up continually to serve your Lord yet more and more, and think not that your work is finished.

And, beloved, *we must not be beginning to look for our reward here.* If you think to have heaven this side the Jordan, you are greatly mistaken. Heaven is to be hereafter, but heaven is not "by and by." This is the place for fighting; out with your sword! This is the field for labour; get you to your plough! If such a wish could come to you in heaven, you might desire to get back again to the service of earth, that you might do still more for your Lord. When I get to heaven, and you get to heaven, if we know that false doctrine is spreading in the world, we shall long to go back and confront the adversary again, if such wishes are permitted in heaven. While souls

are perishing for lack of knowledge, let none of us want to be away from the earth; so long as men need us to tell them the way of salvation, let us gladly continue at our work; let us serve God, my brethren, while we have the opportunity,—

> "In works which perfect saints above,
> And holy angels cannot do."

Now is our time for preaching; now is your time for teaching the children. Seven heavens could not find us another pulpit when once we get to glory; we might almost wish that they could. What opportunities of praying with the sick, and instructing ignorant children you now have! You will not have them when once you are in the other world; therefore use the golden hours you have while you are here below. Your service is not finished, so do not wish to be treated as though it were. Ask not honour from men, ask not even for honour from God, if that were meant to exempt you from further shame, from further suffering, from further reproach, for Christ's dear sake. The further we go in his service, the more resolved we are to give up everything for him. When we first started, we may have thought of making some reserve; but now we have gone so far into the river of consecration that we find "waters to swim in"; and we can truly say,—

> "Yet if I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call,
> I love my God with zeal so great
> That I should give him all."

May you not only sing it, but may you mean it, and practise it, for Christ's sake!

IV. Now we go a step further. WE ARE ALWAYS TO PUT OUR MASTER FIRST. We are servants, and our work is not done; neither ought we to wish to be treated as though it were done. We are not ourselves to sit down to meat; but we are to hear our Master say, "Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink." I will very hurriedly mention these points.

First, *we are to prefer service to rest.* Service is feeding our Master; rest is refreshing ourselves. If we may have a choice, we must always choose that which will be most for his glory. If it be necessary to rest for his glory, rest; but if you can better serve him by continued activity, even unto death, select the service.

Next, *we must put his pleasure before our own.* I must not want what will please me, but what will please him; it ought always to please us to have the opportunity of pleasing him. Did not Abraham run unto the herd, to fetch a calf tender and good, that he might feed the blessed ones when, under the tree, they came to favour him with a visit? What an honour is put upon us when we are permitted to feed Christ, and to wait upon him till he hath eaten and drunken! I can hardly conceive of myself as having the high honour, on bended knee, of waiting on my Lord. If he would but once come to my house, what would I not do for him? So have I often said; yet the whole of our life should be an entertainment of Christ, our blessed Prince. We

should ever be seeking to gratify him, to give him to drink that which he thirsts for in the salvation of the souls of men, and to give him to eat of that which he delights in, namely, the holiness and consecration of his people. His pleasure is to be put before our pleasure.

And, next, *his people are to be preferred before ourselves.* His people are his body; therefore think more of his body than of your own body. Let the poor saints be very near your heart; let the man in whom you see anything of Christ be loved because of your Lord's likeness which you see in him. Always put Christ's people before yourself.

And *put his name before your own name.* I want you to dwell upon that. There is always a tendency among us to want to keep up our own respectability; and if we are ministers, to keep up our own name. The temptation has come to men who have been eminently useful to found a denomination for the preservation of their name. George Whitefield was saved from that; when some people wanted him to set up a new sect to be called by his name, he said, "No; let my name perish, but let Christ's name stand for ever." So say I, let sect go, and let my name go, and let everything go; but let Christ and his truth be preserved. Make no reckoning between a grain of Christ's glory and a ton of your own. Always think that everything you have has gone already, and that you yourself have gone, a living sacrifice, wholly given up to your Lord. If you must be made as the offscouring of all things, as the rubbish on the dunghill, so let it be, so that Christ Jesus may be glorious, and every particle of his truth may be set on high in the hearts of men. This is the meaning of the text here; thou art not to sit down to meat as yet, thou art to gird thyself and serve thy Lord; and thy eating and thy drinking shall be glorious indeed "by and by." This same Gospel has a phrase in it which has often staggered me; I mean that passage where Christ says that he will gird himself, and come forth and serve his servants who girded themselves to serve him. The high reward reserved for you ought to brace you up to the most arduous service as long as you live. God help you to render such service, for Christ's sake!

V. I close with this remark, WE ARE TO TAKE OUR PLACE LOW DOWN. Read the latter part of the text: "Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not." I feel inclined to laugh as I read this verse, "Doth he thank that servant?" Only imagine the Lord Jesus Christ thanking you or thanking me for anything that we might do, even if we did all that he commanded us! For him to thank us for what we do, even if we did all we ought, seems utterly absurd.

And then, how could he thank us for what we have not done, for we have not done the things which were commanded us? We have left many of them undone, and we have done the things we ought not to have done. What thanks do we deserve? None, I trow.

Then, besides, dear friends, if we had done all, Christ's thanks, if they were given to us, would be for so little service compared with his deserts. We are, at our best, unprofitable servants. Think of what he has done for us, and do not set side by side with that anything that we have ever done for him who loved us to the life, and to the death, who loved us eternally and infinitely. What have we done for

him compared with what he has done for us? Our service put beside Christ's is like one single grain of dust put in comparison with the mighty orb of the sun. There is but poor comparison there; but there is no comparison at all between the little we do for Christ and the great, the immeasurable service that he has rendered to us. Truly, we are unprofitable servants to him.

And then, beloved, whatever we have done has all been done in us by him. Whatever fruit we have, Christ can say to us, "From me is thy fruit found." If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, if there be any love, if there be any faith, if there be any zeal, if there be any holiness, was it not all given to us? Are we not all the greater debtors to God, the more we have done? What have we ever profited him? Growing saints think themselves nothing; full-grown saints think themselves less than nothing. You may guess your real weight by the depths to which you sink in self-abasement. You may estimate your true value in the market of heaven by the low estimate you put upon yourself. May the Lord give us, therefore, to be his willing, ardent, earnest servants! Oh, never let us have a single lofty thought as to the service that we have rendered, because, you know, if we once begin to think that we are very fine servants, we shall not like to do some of the work which he puts upon us. We shall be too proud for that service; and there is many a servant of God who is too tall, too big for his place, and therefore he is not likely to do much for his Master. There is much to be done that flesh and blood will not brook, especially in dealing with some of the Lord's people who are ill-mannered and foolish; but we must learn to clean the saucepans, to do the drudge's work, the servile work, if we are to be true servants for Christ. We must even select that sort of service, and prefer it, if we would be like our Master, and desire to take the highest place in the ranks of the believers. "These are hard things," say you. They are, to flesh and blood; but the Lord can give us of his Spirit, that we may conquer flesh and blood.

Do any of you here say, "I am no servant of Christ, and I do not want to be one"? The day will come when you would give your eyes to be his servants, even though you had to serve him in the dark throughout your life. I would sooner be the Lord's dog than the devil's darling; it is better to have the lowest place in Christ's house than to have the highest place in the tents of wickedness. If any here are unconverted, I can tell them that the sorrows of Christ are better than the pleasures of sin. Christ's blacks are whiter than your whitest things. Christ's servitude is more heavenly than the world's heaven. A blow from Christ is better than a kiss from the lips of sin. Oh, if you had but one glance, if you could even have but a glimpse at the glory that Jesus has, you would come to him, and beg him first to save you, and then to let you serve him, for it is better to serve Christ in the meanest capacity than to be the Czar of all the Russias, or even empress of the whole world!

God give me but to have a place where, washed in his blood, I may wear the white garments of an everlasting servitude to him, and he shall have the praise for it, world without end! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XVII. 1—10.

Verse 1. *Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come:*

We are so strangely made that even good men do not always agree, and there are so many bad men about that they will cast a stumbling-block in our way if they can.

1, 2. *But woe unto him, through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*

To do grievous damage to the soul of the very least of Christ's people, is a great and ruinous sin; nothing can be worse. God grant that we may not do this even inadvertently! Let not the strong indulge in that which would be unsafe for the weak, lest the weak be led into sin through that which the strong brother might find lawful, but which certainly would not be expedient. May none of us ever wilfully grieve any child of God!

3. *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent,*

Thou shalt not believe in his penitence? "No, surely," say you, "that is incorrect." Yes, it is incorrect; but that is what many of you do. I was only reading as things generally are; but that is not Christ's direction.

3, 4. *Forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day,*

That is seven times too often.

4. *And seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.*

Do you say, "That is too many times in a day to forgive him"? Let me ask,—"How many times in a day have you sinned? How many times in a day does God forgive you?" Ah! the seven times a day that you have to forgive your brother are but a small number compared with the innumerable forgivenesses granted to you by our ever-gracious God.

5. *And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.*

For this kind of patient forgiving seemed too much for them, unless they had a larger stock of faith; and therein they were right. Strength of faith gives strength of love, and strength of love makes forgiveness easy.

6. *And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.*

Now, if faith as a grain of mustard seed can do this, what cannot strong faith do? What a mercy it is for us that there is so much power in such little faith! A very small piece of dynamite can work great wonders; and within the tiniest morsel of faith, if it be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, there lies concealed almost omnipotent force. Why do we not exercise that faith more? Nothing is impossible to him that believeth. We could blast the very strongholds of Satan with this powerful powder if we would but try it.

7, 8. *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink?*

See, brethren, our position as believers; we are here as servants. It is not the time for feasting yet. Whatever work we have done, even if it is

getting towards the evening of our life's day, we must not think of sitting down yet, and expecting our Master to wait upon us. No, we must go on with our service, and reckon it to be our highest privilege still to gird ourselves, and wait on him. This is not the place of resting or of feasting; this is the day of our holy servitude. Let us work on, ploughing while we have strength for it; and when the sun goes down at eventide, then waiting like servants at the table of their lord.

9. *Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not.*

Do you take off your hat to your servants, and say, "I am very grateful to you for doing your duty"? Not so. And even he who serves God best, may he expect honour as his due? Ah! no; he shall have honour because of the grace of his Master; but it is not his place to look for it, much less is it right for him to expect it as his due.

10. *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.*

And who shall praise us for that? The most self-denying servant of the Saviour, the most ardent labourer for the Lord, will expect nothing of God except to be blessed by his abounding grace. What can we deserve of the dear hands of him who bought us with his blood? Are we not the bond-servants of Christ? "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." Therefore, whatever service you can render is due to him; and unto him let it be freely given without one thought of self-praise or pride because it is done so well.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—660, 663, 658.

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JOHN PLOUGHMAN'S SHEET ALMANACK for 1894.

Many friends have expressed their fear that they would not see another of their much-prized *John Ploughman's Sheet Almanacks*. To such, it will be a glad surprise that we are able to announce that the broadsheet for 1894 is now on sale. The dear one who is best qualified to express an opinion upon such a subject, assures us that the new Almanack is quite worthy to take its place among its many honoured predecessors; and we hope all our readers, when they have purchased and perused it, will be of the same opinion, and will, therefore, help to speed it on its mission of mercy.

The large central picture will commend the Almanack to all who loved, and still love "John Ploughman." It is a new view of "The Empty Study at 'Westwood'", showing many of Mr. Spurgeon's precious books, his well-used chair, his best portrait, his early bust, etc. At the four corners of the sheet there are Eastern illustrations of farm life, drawn by an artist who travelled to Palestine on purpose to be able to give correct representations of the manners and customs of the dwellers in the Holy Land.

As a justification of the title, *John Ploughman's Almanack*, we may state that a very large proportion of the proverbs, maxims, and mottoes here published, had been diligently prepared by Mr. Spurgeon, and laid by for future use, while many others have been culled from his own utterances and writings. Every factory, workshop, play-room, kitchen, and counting-house in the land should have one or more of these Almanacks on their walls; and they should also be fastened in the cabins of all those that go down to the sea in ships.—*Extract from The Sword and the Trowel, November*, 1893.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THREE TEXTS, BUT ONE SUBJECT,—FAITH.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 19TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 22nd, 1889.

"In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge."—Psalm lvii. 1.
"Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee."—Psalm lv. 22.
"Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God."—Isaiah l. 10.

IT is the preacher's business to endeavour to make plain to the people the meaning of the word FAITH. Inasmuch as salvation comes by believing, it is most important that men should know what believing is; and though we have to preach upon many topics, and take the whole range of the Word of God, yet it often behoveth the minister of Christ to dwell especially upon the way whereby men are saved, and to explain what is that step by which they enter into eternal life.

You may think that it is very easy to explain faith, and so it is; but it is easier still to confound people with your explanation. There is nothing simpler in the world than to believe in Christ Jesus; yet probably there is nothing more difficult than to explain to a man what it is to believe in the Lord Jesus; not that the thing itself is difficult, but the explaining of it is not so easy. You remember the story, perhaps, of Mr. Thomas Scott, a very excellent commentator, who brought out an edition of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, to which he has written very excellent, and, I think that I must add, very dull notes. On going round his parish, he called on an aged person, and found her studying the book. "Well, my good woman," said he, "I see that you are reading Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*." "Yes, sir," she replied, "I always enjoy that book." "And, pray, do you understand it?" "Yes, sir, I understand it very well; and I think that, by the grace of God, I shall one day understand your explanation of it," which was not very complimentary to Mr. Scott. So, I have no doubt that there are many who better understand what faith is without our explanations. It is so easy to darken counsel by words without knowledge, and to give illustrations which themselves need to be illustrated, and definitions which need to be defined. I am afraid of

doing that to-night; I see my difficulty, and I cry to God to help me to put faith very plainly before every sinner here, that you may all know what it is, and may at once exercise it.

I have met with a large number of persons, who have believed in Christ, who were accustomed to hear the gospel preached, and to have faith explained to them; but in almost every case they have told me that they did not know what faith was till they themselves believed, and, although they were told, a hundred times over, that it was simply trusting in Christ, they still did not get a hold of the right idea, they still entertained the thought that there was something to be felt, something to be done, something to be endured, something or other more than the simple casting of themselves upon Christ for eternal salvation. I have also noticed how, when I have tried to use illustrations, the friend to whom I have spoken has not been affected by them, and has not understood my illustrations. Speaking to a young man once, I quoted to him that verse of Dr. Watts which begins,—

> "A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
> On thy kind arms I fall."

"But," said he, "I cannot fall." "Oh! my dear friend," I replied, "you do not catch the idea at all, because it is not a thing that a man can do. He falls because he cannot help it; there is no effort in falling, it is cessation from effort." Still, though I put it, as I thought, so that he ought to understand it, he did not comprehend it then. It was some time after, when the Holy Spirit revealed it to him, that he came to understand what faith was. Perhaps you ask, "Are we such dolts that we do not even understand plain Saxon language when it has to do with spiritual things?" Ah, my hearers, sin has made fools of us! Sin has so befooled us, that even God's Word itself does not convey God's meaning to our stupid minds until the Spirit of God comes, and teaches our reason, reason, and takes the film from our eyes, and helps us to see what is, in itself, plain as a pikestaff, but is not plain to us by reason of our sinful and corrupt nature. Before I try, then, to preach about what faith is, may I ask you to pray the Holy Ghost to come, and open men's eyes, that they may see what faith is? For truly, as we know not what we should pray for as we ought, we know not how to believe as we ought; and we make mistakes on this simplest of all subjects until the Holy Spirit sets us right. Divine Spirit, we believe in thee, but we do not believe in ourselves! We see, in some measure, how stupid, how ignorant we are. Come, we pray thee, and teach us even the first lesson of the doctrines of Christ, teach us to believe in Jesus!

If you want to cut a diamond, you must cut it with a diamond; so, if you want to explain Scripture, you must explain it with Scripture. I thought, therefore, that I would take three expressions from the Old Testament, which may help to set forth what faith really is.

I. The first expression you will find in the fifty-seventh Psalm, and the first verse. It shows that faith is HIDING IN GOD: "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge."

See then, trusting in God, that is, faith, is the same thing as hiding

under the shadow of God's wings by way of refuge. Let me explain that figure, first, as relating to *birds beneath their mother's wing*. There is a hawk in the sky, the hen sees it, she begins to give her warning "cluck"; the little chickens hardly know what the danger is, but they understand the mother's call, and they see her crouching down on the ground. Have you never seen her close to the earth, with her wings outspread, and calling and calling again till every one of her birdlets comes and hides beneath the mother's wing? They are out of sight of the bird of prey; if that hawk comes down at all, it will have to attack the hen, and kill her before it can reach her chicks. The pecks of its bill, the tearing of its talons, will have to be first upon the mother-bird, for her little ones are all hidden beneath the covert of her wings.

Now, that hiding is an illustration of faith. Here is Christ, the Saviour, and I hide myself under him. The justice of God must smite the sinner, or One who is able and willing to suffer in the sinner's stead. It is imperative, as a first law of the universe, that sin cannot go unpunished. As justice approaches, with drawn sword, I find Christ coming, and interposing between me and the sentence of the law; and if the avenger seeks me, I hide away under Christ, and all the blows must be dealt upon him. You know how he was wounded, rent, torn, that you and I, hiding beneath him, might escape. It sometimes happens, on the sides of the Alps, that a mountain goat or a wild gazelle may be feeding there, and an eagle spies out a kid close by its mother, and the powerful bird thinks to devour that kid, and down it flies; but the little creature crouches as low as it can at its mother's side, and there stands the mother with horns ready to meet the eagle, and to fight against it for the life of her beloved little one. So the little kid is hidden away behind its mother, and she valorously contends for it. In that way we must hide behind the Saviour. We sang just now,—

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee!"

I put myself behind my Saviour; I say to God, "Deal not with me; deal with my dying Saviour. My God, I interpose between thy wrath and my guilty head the sacrifice which he presented on the cross, when he bowed his head, and said, 'It is finished.'"

The act of the chickens hiding away beneath the hen's wings is a very good description of the act of faith.

It may be further illustrated by *travellers hiding beneath a rock*. Journeying through hot countries, they find towards noon that the air is very sultry, and that the sandy soil beneath them reflects the heat of the sun; they seem to be travelling in a hot bath, and they feel faint and weary. But yonder there is a great rock cropping out of the soil, and under its shadow the heat is not felt. I have often been struck with the singular coolness that there is just by the side of a great rock. I have myself sometimes stood out in the sunshine in the South of France, and it has been so hot that I have felt ready to faint, and I have just stepped back within the shadow of a rock, and found it almost as chilly as a vault. Refreshing indeed has it been to get into the

cooler atmosphere. Well, now, Christ is the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; and if you and I come to him, and let his shadow come between us and the burning heat of the sun of divine justice, the heat will fall on the rock, not on us. We shall be safe and refreshed, and the Rock will screen us from all evil. Come and put Christ between you and God. He is the Interposer between God and man; and that is true faith which gets to the side of the Rock Christ, and hides away beneath his sheltering shade.

Take another Biblical metaphor, that of *the manslayer hiding in the city of refuge*. That was a part of the law, you remember. If one had killed a man inadvertently, and not of malice, the next of kin of the man killed would seek revenge; and he followed up the manslayer, and the poor man's only hope of life was to hurry away as quickly as ever he could to a refuge city belonging to the priests. If he could once pass through the gate of a city of refuge, he was sure of a fair trial, and could not be put to death by the avenger of blood. Oh, how he hurried! How his feet seemed to fly over the soil, especially if he saw the avenger at some little distance following him with hot foot! But once let the city gate be shut, within the sacred streets he breathed freely, he was safe. Come, guilty souls, and fly away to Christ, as the manslayer fled away to the city of refuge; and once safe in him, with Jesus as the great gate between you and the avenger of blood, you are perfectly safe. Do you comprehend and catch the thought? It is hiding away in Christ from the pursuit of vengeance, from the righteous wrath of God, that brings safety.

Another illustration comes in here, it is that of *the conies hiding in the rocks:* "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks." A coney was not exactly like a rabbit; a rabbit hardly dwells among rocks, but this creature was always found in holes and crannies of the rocks. Poor little coney, a dog is after it, and the sportsman seeks to destroy it; but there is an opening in the rock, and he slips in there, and is perfectly safe. The dog barks, and the coney's little heart beats fast; but barking will not kill conies. The sportsman looks up and down, but he cannot see the coney; he can see the rock, but he cannot see the coney within the rock. The coney has hidden right away from the keenest sight of the man who would destroy him. Now, just hide in that way in Christ, who died for guilty men. Trust him; believe him; believe that he will save you. Hide yourself in the Rock of Ages, and then, though you may feel some fears, you will have no need of any. Once safe in Christ, all is well with you. You know that, when a ship has been driven by a storm, and the winds are out, the mariners hasten to the harbour. When they get into port, down goes the anchor. The rattle of the chains is one of the pleasantest sounds ever heard when one is sea-sick, and worn out with a tempest-tossed voyage. Down goes the anchor; well, but after that the motion of the ship still keeps on, she rocks to and fro; yes, but the anchor is down, the fear is all over; no matter how the vessel rocks, the winds cannot drive her out of the harbour; she is safe in port, and the anchor is down, all is well with her. Oh, if to-night you can let the anchor go right down into the deeps, and trust Christ, get a grip of Christ, and hold on to Christ, you may have some

fears, and there may be some tossings for you yet to endure, but all is well! As the ship hides itself in the harbour, so do you hide away in Christ, saying with David, "In the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge." This is faith.

I cannot preach as I would. I have been learning to preach for ever so many years, but I cannot do it as I want to; but I wish that, instead of my preaching to you, you would practise what I bid you, and hide away under the shadow of Christ's wings.

"Come, guilty souls, and flee away
Like doves to Jesu's wounds;
This is the welcome gospel-day,
Wherein free grace abounds."

I remember when I first hid away in that Rock. I have been tempted many times to come out; but I never will. I cannot fight the hawk, I cannot kill the eagle, but I can squeeze myself further back into my Rock, and hide away there; and even—

"When my eye-strings break in death,
When I soar through tracks unknown,"

and see Christ on his judgment-throne, I hope still to shelter in the Rock of Ages. Do the same, dear sister. Do the same, dear brother. May the Holy Ghost lead you to do it now! Remember that you have to believe for yourself; the Holy Ghost will not believe for you, he cannot believe for you. How can he? He has nothing to believe. It is you who have to believe; and though he worketh in you to will and to do, he works, but you believe. It is only personal faith that saves; it could not be the faith of the Holy Ghost, it must be the sinner's own faith though it is wrought in him by the Spirit of God. Therefore, believe thou, and live thou unto God.

II. Having dwelt on that illustration long enough, I ask you now to notice another expression in Psalm fifty-five, verse twenty-two: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." This passage sets forth faith as ROLLING OUR BURDEN UPON GOD.

I believe that this text might be rendered, "Roll thy burden upon the Lord." The similar passage in Psalm thirty-seven, verse five, "Commit thy way unto the Lord," is in the margin, "Roll thy way upon the Lord."

Faith, then, is *the leaving of our burdens with God.* When a man believes in Christ, he shifts his burden from his own shoulders on to the shoulders of Christ.

"My soul looks back to see
The burdens thou didst bear,
When hanging on the cursèd tree,
And hopes her guilt was there."

There you are, stooping down beneath a crushing load, heavy as that which Atlas was supposed to bear when the whole world was on his back, and Christ comes in, and says, "Roll thy burden from off thy shoulders on to mine; let me bear it for you."

Well, then, if the burden be laid upon Christ, then *we have not to*

bear it ourselves. Notice that. Some will say, "We trust Christ, but yet we are not at ease." How is that? If you have trusted Christ, you have rolled your burden upon him; it is no longer upon you. I do not know whether there are still, near Ludgate Hill, as there used to be, certain rests for burden-bearers. You might have seen the porter come toiling up to that spot, and as he shifted his burden on to the rest, he was himself relieved of the load. I have often looked at one of those rests at Mentone, and seen the women come along the road, with huge baskets of lemons or oranges on their heads, and as soon as they have reached this kind of table, they have put their burden on it, and sat down, and rested a while. Now, when they put their basket of oranges there, it is not on their head, is it? There is the beauty of rolling your burden upon Christ; when he takes it, it is not on you any longer. A thing cannot be in two places at one time; and when, by faith, I lay my burden down at Jesus' feet, I have not got it. If my sin is laid on him, it does not any longer lie on me. Come, poor soul, here is the act of faith, to take the mighty burden, that will crush thee lower than the lowest hell, and lay it on Christ thy Saviour.

When the burden is on him, and not on us, *the burden is not ours to take up again.* I have heard that some of our rests in London were done away with, because porters were known to come and put their loads on them, and sit down a while, and afterwards get up and go home without them. You would hardly believe they could be so forgetful; but people do strange things. However, that is a mistake that I want you to make with regard to Christ, for there is no mistake in it. Lay your sin on him by an act of faith; but do not take it up again. I never can believe, as some do, in God forgiving our sin, and afterwards laying it to our account. I do believe that, in the day when our sin was laid on Christ, it was all laid there, and taken away from his people never to be charged against them again. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." How far is the East from the West? If you could travel, like a ray of light, as far eastward as you pleased, while another went as far westward as he could desire, you might go on for ever and for ever, and yet not meet. The distance, so far as created things can be, is infinite; and so far hath the Lord removed our transgressions from us. If we, by faith, lay our sins upon Christ, God himself forgets them, and casts them behind his back, so that he says that, if they are searched for, they shall not be found any more for ever.

And here is one of the greatest mercies of all, that *the burden is not even on Christ now.* Roll thy burden upon him; and if thou dost, that burden is not on him now. He died on the cross, and they laid him in the sepulchre. Thy sin rolls into his sepulchre, it is buried; Christ has left it as a dead and buried thing, and he has risen from among the dead. He took your debt upon himself; but when he paid that debt, it was not any more due from him, neither was it due from you; therefore, we rightly sing,—

"Now both the Surety and sinner are free."

The atoning sacrifice of Christ is so complete a satisfaction to the Lord, that even the sin that was laid on the Lamb of God is gone for

ever. It has ceased even to be, so that a believer in Christ may indeed rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Now then, roll your burden upon the Lord. I really think that, if a number of friends all stood here to-night, groaning under a great load, and I said, "Just roll your burdens off," they would understand me. What a lot of rolling off would be done very soon! That is all that is required with your sin. Jesus is willing to take it; Jesus is willing to obliterate all the black record against you; let it go to him. Tell the devil that you have been answering him long enough, and you are not going to talk to him any longer, for you have an Advocate, in whose hands you are going to leave your case. When a man has an advocate, he does not go and do his legal business himself; he refers everybody to his advocate. "Go and settle with him," says he; and to-night, when the devil says, "You are a sinner," I reply, "I know I am; and so are you." "Ah!" says he, "but you deserve death." "Yes," I answer, "but there is One who stood in my stead; go and settle my account with him. He undertook my business, and he said that he would see me through with it if I would but trust him, and I do trust him; I must refer you to my Advocate, he can settle with you; I cannot." Do that, I pray you. Roll your burden upon the Lord. Trust in him; to roll your burden upon him, is to trust him; I do not know a better figure by which to set faith forth. Oh, that God the Holy Spirit may use it to-night to the unburdening of many poor souls!

III. I said that we would have three of these Old Testament diamonds; the third is found in the fiftieth chapter of Isaiah, and the tenth verse, where faith is likened to STAYING UPON GOD. I read it to you just now, but we will read the verse again: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and" (here is the same thing as trusting in the name of the Lord, the explanation of it) "stay upon his God."

The word "stay" means "lean." If I cannot stand, if I feel giddy, I naturally put out my hand; and if I feel faint, I lean upon some support; and the more faint I am, the more I lean. At this moment, I lean my whole weight upon this platform rail, just *so*. If this rail gives way, I must go down. I am leaning, staying myself wholly here. Now that is what you have to do with Christ, lean on him; with all your weight of sin and sorrow, lean on Jesus Christ, and lean hard. Do not try to hold yourself up now; throw yourself right on him, lean on him, rest on him, let him bear the whole of your weight. Stay yourself upon him.

In order to do that, you must *believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to bear you up*. Do you not believe it? He is God as well as Man; he has offered an all-sufficient atonement to God; he is well-pleasing to the Father; he is the Lord strong and mighty, a Saviour, and a great One. Lean on him, and lean hard. Did anyone say, "I am afraid to trust Christ, lest he may not be able to bear me up"? Oh, dear friend, do not talk so! It does seem so absurd. I remember a good old lady, who would never go over the Saltash bridge at Plymouth. She looked up at it, and said that she did not believe

that it would ever bear her weight. There were great luggage trains that went rolling over it, but still she always said that it would not bear her. You smile, do you? Now, just think that you are that old woman; you are doing a more foolish thing than she did, if you cannot trust Christ with your weight, Christ who is omnipotent to save. How foolish you must be! He is able to save you. He is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him; therefore stay yourself upon him.

Then, *lean all your weight on him;* if you do that, you no longer have to support yourself. The sinner says, "I do not think that I could ever get to heaven." Lean upon Christ to get you there. "Oh, but if I were to leave my sins, I am afraid that I should go back to them!" Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back. "Oh, but if I lived here many years, I should be tempted, and I might fall!" Lean upon Christ to preserve you from falling. "Ah, but you do not know what a temper I have!" Lean upon Christ to conquer your temper. "But, sir, I have gone back so many times." Lean upon Christ to keep you from going back any more; stay yourself upon him. I cannot possibly mention all your weaknesses, and all your doubts, and all your fears; but whatever they are, lean upon Christ, lean hard on him, like one of our female missionaries, when sustained by one of her converts in the hour of death. The convert said, "Lean on me, missionary; lean on me, sister;" and as she thought that the missionary had a delicacy in resting all her weight, she said, "If you love me, lean hard; for the harder you lean, the more I shall feel that you love me." And Christ says to you, "Sinner, if you love me, lean hard." Lean hard on him, and he will bear you up. You do not need strength for leaning on Christ.

"True belief and true repentance,"

perseverance, and every grace that you want to make you meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, Christ will give it all to you. Depend upon him for it all. You will never have ease of mind, you will never know what full salvation means, till you just give yourself up, as though you were dead, that he might be your life. Resign yourself to Christ, as a wandering sheep has to do to the shepherd, when he takes it by the legs, and throws it on his shoulders, and carries it home rejoicing. Christ can save; he will save; therefore, stay yourself upon him.

If you do, *you shall have perfect peace.* "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." I should like to begin preaching again with that for my text, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee." If you have not perfect peace, it is because you are not staying yourself on God as you ought to do. There is no other way of coming to a perfect rest but by a perfect leaning upon Christ. Will you do that to-night? If a man were to get one foot on a rock, he might stand very well. Suppose that he puts the other foot on the sand, the sea comes up, the sand is treacherous, and his foot begins to sink. I should recommend him to get wholly on that bit of rock, and to stand there. Do so, then; stay yourself wholly upon Christ. Have

no confidence in yourself, in baptism, in sacraments, in prayers, in good works, in anything but the finished work of Christ; and when you get there, you are on a foundation that never can be moved.

I would like to say, as I finish, that I have now served the Lord Jesus Christ for about forty years, and I have preached his gospel, I can say, with all my heart, neither have I cared for anything but to win souls to my Lord Jesus: but when I came to him at first, I had no hope but in his blood and merits, and I have no more hope now, apart from his blood and merits, than I had at the beginning. I stand on the same foundation as I stood upon then. I have heard of a good man, who said, as he was dying, that he was sorting over his life, putting his good works in one bundle, and his bad ones in the other. At last he said to his wife, "It is no use sorting them out, for the good ones are so bad that I think that I will fling them all away, and cling to Christ alone." There was a famous cardinal, in Luther's day, who fought tremendously against the Reformer; but he said, in the course of the discussion, that, seeing that there is much in our good works that is faulty, and no man can be quite sure that he has done enough good works to save him, upon the whole it is better to trust only to the merits of Christ. Well, the best of everything always suits me; and if that is the best, I will let other people have the second best, and just trust in Christ, and trust in Christ alone. Oh, that you would all do so to-night! Have done with yourself, have done with your good works, have done with your bad ones, have done with any reliance upon self whatever; and just come as you are, and trust Christ, who died for the guilty and undeserving. O bankrupt sinner, O sinner without a hope, come thou and just stay thyself upon the immovable foundation of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and thou shalt find eternal life to-night, yea, even to-night! God grant it, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ISAIAH L.

Verse 1. *Thus saith the* LORD,

There is always something weighty coming when you have this preface. If God speaks, we ought to hear with reverence, with attention.

1. *Where is the bill of your mother's divorcement, whom I have put away? or which of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you?*

God is here addressing his ancient people; they had been given up, as it were, left, forsaken. They compared themselves to a wife who had been divorced by her husband, or to children who had been sold by their father because of his extreme poverty. The Lord says, "Now, tell me, have I really put away my chosen people as a man in a pet puts away his wife? Have I really sold you to profit by you? What benefit is it to me that you are carried away captive, and that you are left without comfort?"

1. *Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away.*

It was not God's changeableness, but their own sinfulness, that had

brought upon them all their sufferings. The Jews might have remained a nation in possession of their own land to this day, if they had not turned aside unto idols. It was not that God cast away his people whom he did foreknow; but they cast him off, they sold themselves. Now, if any child of God has fallen into trouble of heart, and has lost his comfort, let him not blame God; his sorrow is caused by his own act and deed. And if any man or woman here should be in deep trouble brought on by sin, let them not set it down to their destiny, let them not call God unkind; but let them take the blame to themselves: "For your iniquities have ye sold yourselves, and for your transgressions is your mother put away."

2. *Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer?*

It is Christ who is speaking here by the mouth of the prophet. When he came, there was "no man." He could not find in all the nation any faithful one to help him in his great redemptive work. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." He preached repentance and faith throughout the land; but they cried, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

2. *Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?*

If you are in the worst plight in which you can be, God can still help you. Despair of yourself; but do not despair of him. If you have come to the very bottom of all things, and the last ray of hope is quenched in midnight darkness, God is still the same. Hear what he says to you, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" Can he not break the bonds of drunkenness? Can he not deliver the unchaste from their vile passions? Can he not pick up from the dunghill the outcast and the offcast? Is anything too hard for the Lord? Is the salvation of the greatest sinners impossible for him to accomplish? That can never be, for he is "mighty to save."

2. *Behold, at my rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness: their fish stinketh, because there is no water, and dieth for thirst.*

God divided the Red Sea, he parted the Jordan asunder, and made a way for his people to pass over. He who has done this can do anything. When God takes up the case, impossibility is not in the dictionary. However great your sorrow, however deep your misfortune, or however grievous your sin, if God comes to deal with it, he will make short work of all your troubles, and all your despair.

3, 4. *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering. The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.*

This is Christ speaking again. When he came here, though he found no man able to help him, none to come and join him in the redemption of his people, yet he gave himself up to the tremendous task. He became instructed of the Father. He was taught to speak a word to weary ones. "Never man spake like this Man." There is no gospel like his gospel, no doctrine like his doctrine. He went to God in private "morning by morning." He received his message from his Father, and he came and delivered it to the people. Oh, what a glorious Christ we have!

5. *The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.*

He had his ear bored, as slaves had when they would not go out free, but meant to remain with their master. Christ had a bored ear, an opened ear. He never rebelled against God's will. He was obedient to the Father,

even unto death. If you want to know how obedient he was, hear me read the next verse:—

6. *I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*

Now let me go back a little, and read again the third verse: "I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering." "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." It is the same divine Person, who musters the hosts of heaven till the very skies are blackened with the artillery of God, who here says, "I gave my back to the smiters, bowing down to the brutal Roman scourge, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair." You remember the scene that I pictured last Sunday night, the whole band of soldiers mocking Christ, and even spitting upon him.* That was the fulfilment of these words, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." That same Christ, without whom was not anything made that was made, whose face is the sun of heaven, whose glory is matchless and unsearchable, says, "I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Do not say, then, that God has no love to you. Do not say that he has cast you away as a husband divorces his wife. Talk no more as if there were no help for you, no means of your deliverance. Behold how low your Saviour stooped, how gracious he was to suffer so much for guilty men, and be encouraged to trust him. He who gave his back to the smiters says to you, "The chastisement of your peace was upon me, and with my stripes you are healed."

7. *For the Lord GOD will help me;*

This is Christ still speaking. Though God himself, yet as the God-Man, looking to his Father for help in the dread struggle through which he went to save us, he declared, "The Lord God will help me."

7. *Therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed.*

And he was not; he went through with all that he had undertaken. He drank our bitter cup till none of the dregs remained. He bore the terrible wrath of God, which else would have rested on us for ever; God helped him, and he bore it all.

8, 9. *He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up.*

Will any now come to battle against Christ, and hope to conquer him? Voltaire used to say, "Crush the Wretch!" but where is Voltaire now? And those who agreed with Voltaire, where are they now? But Jesus ever liveth and reigneth, and God is with him. He who shall once come to battle with our glorious Lord shall soon know the power of Christ's weakness, and the omnipotence of his death.

10. *Who is among you—*

Here is a very blessed question. Christ, having passed through all the trouble that could be passed through, and having come out of it triumphant, now looks round on all his followers, on all the children of God, and he says, "Who is among you"—

10. *That feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God.*

Do you see the drift of it? Our Saviour trusted, and he was not con-

* See the *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, No. 2,333, "The Whole Band against Christ."

founded. He stayed himself upon God even when he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and he came off a conqueror. Trust you in God, and you also will be victorious. Let your strength be drawn from that strong and mighty One who is pledged to help all who trust him, and you shall triumph even as Jesus did.

Do you refuse to trust God? Then listen to this:—

11. *Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled.*

If you think to make yourselves happy in sin, go and do it. If you fancy that your own righteousness will save you, go and try it.

11. *This shall ye have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

Your fire shall not warm you; your sparks shall not enlighten you; you will have to lie down to die, and you shall lie down in sorrow. O my dear hearers, the time will come when every one of us must put off this body, and lie down to die! God grant that we may none of us have to lie down in sorrow; but instead thereof, having trusted in God, may he light our candle for us in the last moment, that we may fall asleep in Jesus, and wake up in his likeness in the everlasting glory!

May God bless to us the reading of his Word! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—552, 555, 502.

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Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE LOVE OF JONATHAN, AND THE LOVE OF JESUS.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, NOVEMBER 26TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, September 29th, 1889.

"Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."—2 Samuel i. 26.

DAVID was a poet; and when he found that his best-beloved friend had fallen by the arrows of the Philistines, he wept greatly, and then he cheered his heart by writing the very fine elegy, which in after years was called "The Song of the Bow." Even if David's lamentation is judged according to the canons of literary taste, it must be placed among the first of poetical compositions. Thus David tried to keep his friend's memory green; the song was meant to be a memorial of him. Such friends as Jonathan are not common; and when we have had them, we must not forget them.

It is sad that, in these days, friendship is proverbially a frail thing. Friends are like swallows, that are with us in our summertime, and gone when the damps of autumn begin to gather. When a man has a faithful friend, let him grapple him to his side with hooks of steel; and when he loses him, let him know that he has lost what will be very hard to replace, and let him not forget his friend though he be buried beneath the sod. True friendship likes to fashion memorials of the departed. We keep mementoes of the loved ones we have lost, we like to think of the happy days of communion we have had together, and we will not allow the cherished name to be blotted out from the memory of men.

When I thought of this subject, I said to myself, "I shall see many to-night who are lovers of the Lord Jesus Christ; I shall be face to face with thousands who love him as they love their own soul." I believe that is my happiness now. Well then, beloved friends, let us who love Christ keep him ever in memory. If you can speak of his name, be not silent. If you can make melody, in honour of Jesus, in the great congregation, take down the minstrel's harp, and lay your fingers among the strings, and bring out sweetest music to his dear name that thousands may hear; but if you have a feebler instrument, sing or play to the two or three, and let those who love you know that you love

your Lord best of all. Or if thy tongue fail thee, use thy pen to let men know who Jesus is. Say, with the psalmist, "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King."

What shall *we* do to keep Christ's name before the sons of men? Let us be inventive, and often make the winds and waves to bear the story of his life and love to those who know it not. I would whisper in the ear of someone, "If thou lovest Jesus, how is it that thou art never at his table?" If there be any way of keeping him in memory, which is better than every other, it is the one which he has himself chosen, "This do in remembrance of me." How do you excuse yourselves, ye lovers of Christ, who have never kept up this feast of love? This is one of his dying requests, "Meet and remember me"; and yet, though you say that you love him, and I will not challenge the truth of what you say, you have never yielded obedience to his loving request, and come to eat the bread and drink of the cup which are the memorials of his broken body and his poured-out blood. David, thou couldst sing of Jonathan, though there was no law that thou shouldst do so; what wilt thou say of some who love the Christ of God better than thou didst love Jonathan, and yet have never remembered him in the way in which he asked to be remembered, but have cast behind their back the sweet forget-me-not of the table of communion?

Let that stand as a preface. May the Lord put our hearts in tune now while we think upon two things! The first is the small type, *Jonathan's love to David;* the second is the infinite anti-type, *Christ's love to men.* Perhaps it will be sweetest to-night if we can each one say, "*Christ's love to me.* He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*." That expression will be in harmony with the words of the text, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

I. First, then, we have to think a little about JONATHAN'S LOVE TO DAVID.

Jonathan's was a singular love, because of *the pureness of its origin.* Jonathan loved David out of great admiration of him. When he saw him come back with the head of Goliath in his hand, he loved him as a soldier loves a soldier, as a brave man loves another brave man. He felt that there was the right kind of metal in that young man; and though Jonathan was the king's son, and heir-apparent to the throne, we find that he "stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle." He felt that such a hero, who could so trust his God, and so expose his life, and come off so victorious, deserved his utmost love. It did not begin in self-interest, it did not begin in relationship; but it began in the likeness that Jonathan saw between his own nature, and that of David. It was one brave man loving another brave man.

Jonathan's love proved also to be *most intense.* It is said that "he loved him as his own soul." He would at any moment have sacrificed his life to preserve the life of David; in fact, I do not doubt that Jonathan thought David's life much more valuable than his own, and that he was quite willing to expose himself to peril that David

might be preserved. Jonathan's was a very intense love. May we see more of this kind of love among Christian men! May they love each other for Christ's sake, and because of the love of God which they see in one another, and may they be intense in their affection!

Jonathan's love was *very disinterested;* because, as I have said, Jonathan was heir-apparent to the throne, but David had been anointed king by Samuel. The kingdom was to be taken from the house of Saul, and given to the house of David. Very naturally, the young prince Jonathan might have felt first envy, and then hatred of David, who was to supplant him; but instead of that, he said to him one day, very touchingly, "Thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee." He meant to be his friend, and his helper, taking joy in seeing David wear the crown which might have adorned his own brow. Happy Jonathan, to be able to put himself in the background like that, and to feel that, if David was first, it was what he himself desired. That friendship, in which a man can set himself on one side for the sake of another, is not yet so common that we can hawk it in the streets.

Jonathan's was a love which *bore up under all opposition*, for he soon found that Saul, his father, in his black heart, hated David. He could not bear the thought that another man should take the place which he coveted for himself, though he did not himself deserve to keep it. He wished to see David dead; and because Jonathan took David's part, Saul was exceedingly angry, and made Jonathan's lot hard to bear; yet Jonathan did not cast off his friend, he clung to David through good report and through evil report. Jonathan was faithful to his father, and very obedient to him; but still he would not give up his friend David, and he would sooner be in jeopardy of the javelin of Saul than end the friendship that existed between himself and God's chosen servant.

And this love was *very active*, for you know how he pleaded for David with his father. He went out into the field, and took counsel with David. He arranged plans and methods for David's preservation; and, on one occasion, we find that he "went to David in the wood, and strengthened his hand in God." Yes, his love was not a matter of mere talk, it was real, practical, active; it was a love which never failed. When the arrow of the Philistine went through the heart of Jonathan on Mount Gilboa, it struck the name of David that was engraven there.

> "He loved him long, and loved him well,
> And loved him to the death;"

so that David could truly say, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

Now, dear friends, do you not think that, when we read a story like that of Jonathan and David, it should stir up in us the desire, not so much to have such a friend, as to be such a friend as Jonathan was to David? Any man can selfishly desire to have a Jonathan; but he is on the right tack who desires to find out a David to whom he can be a Jonathan. There is great joy in life with real friendship on both sides. Some people expect friendship to be always heaping its treasures upon them; but true friendship has two hands, and two feet, and

two eyes. You cannot have a real friendship that is all for taking, and never for giving. David loved Jonathan as Jonathan loved David. May that blessed Spirit of God, who teaches us to love even our enemies, help us to cultivate sanctified friendships, and to be willing to help those who are our brethren in Christ in time of need!

I shall say no more upon that part of my subject; but I hope it will rebuke some who are no friends at all. Oh, how often have we met with such! They are very friendly when their legs are under your mahogany; but they are not so friendly when you have no mahogany, and have hardly a deal table left. They think all the world of you while you can be a ladder by which they climb the wall of prosperity; but when they are on the top of the wall, they too often say that they never saw that ladder in all their lives, and you may take it away. We continually see that kind of thing among men of the world. May it not be so among Christians! May we be true to all who are our friends, as we would be generous even to any who are our foes, if such persons are in existence!

II. But I want now to talk of something more sweet, and more sure. THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO ME, using the first personal pronoun, because it is in the text: "Thy love to *me* was wonderful."

I hope that many here will be helped to use that same pronoun each one for himself or for herself. I do not wish to preach to-night; I want rather to be a sort of fugleman, just to go through the exercises that others may do the same. I am to speak of love which I trust many feel, which I hope they may feel even more than the speaker does; and let it be the ambition of every one of us to love Christ more and more. Let us think of Christ as present here to-night, for so he is, according to his promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." There he stands. With closed eyes, faith perceives him, and she cries, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

I think that we feel this most *when we see our Saviour die*. Sit down at the foot of the cross, and look up. Behold that sacred brow with the thorny wreath upon it. See those blessed eyes, red with weeping; mark those nailed hands, that once scattered benedictions; gaze on those bleeding feet, which hurried on errands of mercy; watch till you can peer into that gaping side, how deep the gash, how wide the breach, see how the water and the blood come streaming forth! This is the Lord of life and glory, who thus dies amid derision and scorn, suffering the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Oh, if you can picture Christ on the cross, and believe that he died for you, you will be led to cry, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of mothers or of wives. Thy love to me was—I cannot describe what it was—it was wonder-ful—as full of wonders as the heavens are full of stars, or as a forest is full of leaves. Thy love, as I see it in thy death, was wonderful." Do you picture David saying this as he thinks of the body of Jonathan pierced with the arrows of his enemies, "Thy love to me was wonderful"? Will you not stand so to-night, in imagination, over your Saviour's body, as you see it wrapped in spices, and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa? Ere yet the stone is rolled to the cave's mouth, will you not look on that mangled form, and say, "In very truth, thy love to me was wonderful"?

Beloved friends, sometimes we feel as if our love to our departed ones would know another great flood-tide if they could come back again. You have lost—no, I will not harrow up your feelings,—you have all lost those most dear, and your sorrow was great as you laid them in the grave; but if to-night, when you reached your home, you should find, sitting in that room of yours, the beloved one come back, I think that your love would suddenly leap up into an ecstacy, and it would be greater than ever it was before. "Has my husband returned to me? Has my spouse come back to me? Has my mother, my child, been restored to me?" Oh, what a feast of love our souls would have if there could be such a reunion in our bereaved households! Well, remember that *he who died for us rose again.*

"He lives, the great Redeemer lives,"

lives with our love still within his heart, lives to love us as much in his eternal glory as he did in the shame and spitting while he was on earth. Come, give your love room and space to-night, as you remember him as dead, but rejoice in him as living.

I think, also, that we sometimes feel the greatest love to dear friends when we find others doing them despite. When David found that Jonathan's body had been dishonoured by the Philistines, that they had taken away the bodies of King Saul and his sons to hang them on the wall of Beth-shan, then was he sorely troubled, and his love broke forth again in sighs, and cries, and tears. And I must say to-night that *I love my Lord all the more because of the insults others heap upon him.* When I have lately seen books written against his atoning sacrifice, when I meet with men, calling themselves Christians, who speak lightly of the sacred expiation, and even of the divine Person of the great sacrifice, my heart first burns with indignation against the traitors,—true successors of Judas,—and then my soul cries, "My Saviour, by the dishonour that they put on thee, I love thee all the more. By the shame that they again cast on thee, as though thou wert a hundred times crucified, I vow to serve thee with a hundredfold energy and force of concentrated love, for thy love to *me* was wonderful." Some can speak lightly of Christ; mayhap they never knew such love as he has shown to me. Some can despise his blood; possibly they were never washed from such sins as mine. Some think lightly of his faith; perhaps they have never had such communion with him as my heart has known; but I must say of him, "Thy love to *me* was, is, and ever shall be, wonderful, passing all loves supposable in heaven or earth besides."

Now let me briefly tell the story of that love,—it is a long story,—the love of Christ to me. Part of its wonder lies in *the object of this love*, that it should be bestowed upon me: "Thy love to *me*." Dear brother, dear sister, will you only talk about it just now to yourself? "It is a wonder that Christ should love anybody; but is it not the greatest wonder of all that he should love me? Who am I, and what is my father's house, that Christ should love me?"

"What was there in you that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?"

Thy love to *me!* There was special undesert; there were many reasons why love should have passed me by; but thy love to me was wonderful that thou shouldst single out me. Tell it in heaven that there is no greater wonder there than that Christ should love me; and when you get there, say to all the bright spirits before the throne, "There is no greater wonder in the salvation of you all than there is in my salvation. Thy love to me, my Lord," and you will bow adoringly at Christ's feet as you say it, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Then throw the emphasis on the first word, "*Thy* love to me," and you have another part of the wonder, that is, in *the Giver of this love.* For a man to love me, well, should not men love their kind? But for God to love me, for the Infinite, for the inconceivably lovely One, whose ideal of that which is loveable must be far beyond human conception, for him to love me, this is a miracle indeed. Can you imagine it, that God who is greater than immensity, whose life is longer than time, that God the all-boundless One, should love you? That he should think of you, pity you, consider you, this is all very well; but that he should *love* you, that his heart should go out to you, that he should choose you, that he should have graven you on the palms of his hands, that he should not rest in heaven without you, that he should not think heaven complete until he brings you there, that you should be the bride, and Christ the Bridegroom, that there should be eternal love between him and you, oh, as you think of it, lift up your hands with adoring wonder, and say, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Now begin, if you can, to *consider the commencement of this love.* When did God begin to love his own elect? There was a time when he began to make the worlds; but from eternity he has loved his chosen. Before the first flash of light illumined the primeval darkness, God loved his people. Before the first pulsation of life came into human bodies, long ere there were such beings as men and women, he loved his own. He saw them in the glass of predestination and foreknowledge, and he loved them then; his delights even then were with the sons of men. His love had no beginning, it was like himself, self-existent, starting from itself, and there never was a time when God did not love his own people. Think of that wonder of grace, that such a speck of dust as you are should have been loved from eternity, that such a handful of ashes as I am should have been loved from before all worlds! Tell it as with voice of trumpet, for God hath said it, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

Christ's love, then, is wonderful in its beginning; and *when it began to work on me,* it was still wonderful, for what did I do? I refused it. When Christ came in robes of love to me, and presented himself as a candidate for my heart's acceptance, I told him that I would not have him. There was a wanton world that had my heart. There was the devil himself, in all manner of sinful shapes; and he had my hand, and I was his. Was it not so with some of you, that Christ wooed you many a year, and you would not have him? He came to you sometimes threatening, and sometimes inviting; he came to you by providences, by preachers, by books, by his good Spirit; yet though

you turned your back on him, he never turned his back on you; he would not take "No" for an answer.

> "Determined to save, he watched o'er my path
> When, Satan's blind slave, I sported with death."

Think of a man, who used to come staggering out of a public-house late at night, yet he is loved of God! Or of a thief, whose hair was cut short in the prison, yet he was loved of God, and here he is to-night sitting at Jesus' feet, rejoicing in that love! Oh, what songs there will be in heaven concerning the love of Christ to his own, and the rebuffs which the dear Lover of our souls received by the sad, sad usage of ungodly, wilful men! "Thy love to me was wonderful."

And when *Christ's love led him to come here, and take our nature*, was it not wonderful? He reigned enthroned in heaven; seraphim and cherubim gladly did his bidding. He was God, and yet he came down from yonder royal palace to that stable at Bethlehem, and to the manger where the hornèd oxen fed. 'Tis he! 'Tis he! But as George Herbert reminds us, he hath unrobed himself, and hung his azure mantle on the sky, and all his rings upon the stars; and there he lies, a babe in swaddling bands, taking human nature into union with his divinity because he loved us. Truly, thou blessed Child, whom I would take into mine arms as Simeon did, and say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" thy love to me was wonderful! Behold Christ with the sceptre of heaven in his hand, and then see him sitting on the edge of a well, talking to an adulterous woman. Gaze on him with the harps of angels ringing out his praise, and then see him with all the riff-raff of Jerusalem scoffing at him, and bidding him come down from the cross. If he stooped to become a man like ourselves, and stooped lower still, even unto death, truly may each saved one cry to him, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

There is one thing that makes the love of Christ more wonderful than anything else, and that is, that he not only took our nature, but *he took our sin.* There, scrape it up together, the filthy stuff that has made God himself to sicken at the thought of man, I mean, the sin and the pollution of our lives. Behold, the Lord hath gathered it up together in one foul heap, enough to putrefy the universe, and he hath laid it all on Christ, and the great Sin-bearer takes it upon himself as though it were his own, though it was not. He suffers for it, he bears the sentence of justice on account of it, and then he hurls it all away into the abyss of oblivion, where it shall never be found again. My Saviour, didst thou bear my sin in thine own body on the tree? Wast thou condemned for my condemnation? Then, in very deed, thy love to me was wonderful.

I do not know how to break my text up so as to bring it home to each believer; I wish that everyone here, who really has known Christ's love, would help me by a personal thought upon *the brotherly and condescending character of this love.* Times have been when we, who love Christ's name, have been in trouble, and he has been very near to us. Times have been when we have been misrepresented, and

abused, and he has smiled, oh, so sweetly on us! Times have been when bodily pain has made us very faint, and he has put underneath us the everlasting arms. Speak as you find, beloved; how have you found the Lord Jesus in your dark days, in your heavy days, in your weary days? Have you not found him a matchless Friend? I can bear my own witness that there is no comfort like his comfort, there is no smile like his smile, there is no touch of help like his delivering hand. "Thy love to me was wonderful." Sometimes, when I have told the story of God's goodness to me, a Christian friend has said, "Have you not written all that down?" "No, I have not," I have replied. "Will you not take care, before you die, that it is all written down?" I have said, "No, I do not know that I shall." Now perhaps your life's story will die out with yourself, yet have there not been very marvellous touches of Christ's love in it? Have there not been windows of agates, and gates of carbuncle, through which you have seen your Lord's face; and can you not say to-night, looking over your pilgrim path from the first day until now, "Lord, thou hast been ever with me; thy love to me was wonderful in condescending, helpful fellowship in the time of my need"?

Think, also, of *the comforting and thoughtful provisions of Christ's love.* Sometimes you have been well-nigh slipping, not merely as to trouble, but as to sin. Our lives are not all to our credit; there have been sad moments, when unbelief has crept in on the back of thoughtlessness, and you have been almost a sceptic. There have been evil moments, when sin has insinuated itself into the imagination, and you have almost done that which would have been your ruin. Have there not been times in your life when you have been smitten, and, if there had not been some One to uphold you, you would have fallen, almost unconsciously fallen, and there have lain down to die? But oh, how Jesus has watched over you, and cared for you! Never mother nursed her babe with such care as Christ has given to you. When you look back, sometimes, and see the pit from which you have been preserved, into which you might have fallen; when you meet with some old friend, who used, years ago, to be singing at your side, but is now a drunkard or profane, and you say, "Why should he be like that any more than I should? Who hath made me to differ? What but the grace of God has kept me until now?" ah, then you see how Christ's love to you has been wonderful, passing the love of women!

But the love of Christ to us is most of all wonderful in *its plans for the future.* You know not, and you cannot conceive, what he will yet do for you. You are in trouble, are you? Well, joy cometh in the morning. Just now, you have to drink the bitter cup, and God gives you pills that you do not like. Take them at his hand, for they are meant for your good. 'Tis but a little while, and then sorrow and sighing shall for ever flee away. Has any redeemed man here any notion of what God has prepared for them that love him? You shall stand among the perfected, and go in and out amongst the holy. You shall be where no trouble shall ever reach you, or even the noise and dash of a wave of sorrow ever reach your ears. You shall be where it shall be your felicity to serve God without mistake, without trans-

gression, and without omission. You shall behold the face of the King in his beauty, not now and then, but for ever without a cloud or a veil between. You shall find it your delight to praise him; and your voice shall be heard amid the choirs of the glorified as you adore the Lamb whose love to you has been so wonderful. And what will be your employments in heaven? Ah, that I cannot tell you; but they shall be employments that shall be equally honourable and delightful!

I have told you before what I sometimes dream shall be my lot in glory, to stand not here, and preach to a handful of people, though it be verily a large handful; but to stand upon some starry orb, and preach of Christ to whole constellations at once, and thunder out my remembrances of his sweet love to myriads of beings who have never heard of him as yet, for they have never sinned, but who will drink in all the tidings of what Jesus did for sinful men. And each of you, according to your training for it, shall make known to angels, and principalities, and powers, the manifold wisdom of God. There is plenty of room for you all, for God's universe will need millions upon millions of messengers to go through it all, and tell out the story of redeeming love. And we, I believe, are here in training for that eternal work of making known to illimitable regions of space, and countless myriads of intelligent beings whom God has created, but who have never fallen, the story of this little planet, and of the God who loved it so that he came here, and died that he might save his people from their sins.

Get ready, brethren, for the eternity which is so near. Within about a hand'sbreadth, you and I shall be in eternity. Even if we live to be eighty or ninety, or fulfil the tale of a hundred years, it is but a little while, and we shall have quitted these dark shores, and landed in the everlasting brightness of endless glory, that is, if we know the love of Christ to-day, and trust in Christ to-day. We shall go on and on for ever and for ever experiencing more and more of this great truth, "Thy love to me was wonderful."

Now let each one answer this question,—Can you say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me"? If not, you are an unhappy man. God make you even more unhappy until you come and look to Jesus Christ, as men looked to the brazen serpent; and as by their looking they were healed, so by your looking may you be made to live to-night! Remember that—

> "There is life for a look at the Crucified One;
> There is life at this moment for thee;
> Then look, sinner—look unto him, and be saved—
> Unto him who was nail'd to the tree."

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—439, 797, 735.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

1 SAMUEL XX.

Verse 1. *And David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?*

David had an enemy upon the throne; and God gave him a friend in the heir to the throne. If thou hast an enemy, thou hast also a friend; God sets the one over against the other in his providence, do thou set the one over against the other in thy thoughts, and be thou comforted thereby. David might have been very heavy at heart about Saul, and so he was; but Jonathan came in to be the makeweight on the other side, and turn the scale in favour of the son of Jesse. Of him David enquired, "What is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life?"

2. *And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me: and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so.*

One admires Jonathan for defending Saul; he will not believe anything bad of his father. Children should never believe anything evil of their parents unless it is forced upon them; this rule is a part of the command, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

3. *And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes; and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly as the* LORD *liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death.*

He wanted Jonathan to believe the truth, namely, that Saul was seeking to kill him, and that he was in great danger from the wrath of the king; therefore he took a double oath that it was even so. It is not for Christians to imitate David in this respect, for our Lord's command to his disciples is, "Swear not at all; but let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

4. *Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee.*

Love promises large things. One is reminded here of the love of Christ, and of how he says, "Ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

5, 6. *And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family.*

The family of David was a godly household, and they had a meeting, not for pleasure-making, but for sacrifice; a special family gathering for worship, and David must needs be there. He spake no untruth; he did desire to go to Bethlehem.

7, 8. *If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the* LORD *with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?*

These two men had entered into a solemn covenant before God that they would be friends for life, so David pleaded with Jonathan. He was innocent, he knew that he had done no ill, and therefore he put it to Jonathan, "If I am what thy father thinks me to be, slay me thyself."

9—11. *And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.*

Quite alone, away from their troops, where they could talk together without being overheard. These two good men sought private fellowship; and do you not think that, if we love Christ, we shall want to get alone with him? Shall we not say to him, "Let us go out into the field"? Where there is no private devotion, there is no devotion at all. If we never get alone with Christ, we are altogether strangers both to himself and also to his love.

12—15. *And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth.*

In Jonathan's great love, he wished not only to be David's friend himself, but that all his children should be in love with the same valiant hero. Brethren, our love to Christ makes us long to see our children love him, too. I will not believe that you have any love to Christ unless you pray that your boys and your girls may also love him. Dear children of godly parents, our heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you may love your mother's God, and trust your father's Saviour.

16—18. *So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. Then Jonathan said to David, To morrow is the new moon: and thou shalt be missed, because thy seat will be empty.*

David was not a nobody; if he was away, he was missed. I wish that all attendants at the house of prayer would remember that, when they are away, they are missed. Perhaps some of you have come to-night from some little chapel where you will be greatly missed; I am not going to thank you for coming here, because I am possibly unconsciously causing pain to your pastor, and I do not want to rob him of one of his sheep. David's seat is empty to-night, and he will be missed.

19—23. *And when thou hast stayed three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. And, behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee; go thy way: for the LORD hath sent thee away. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.*

Thus he arranged how to let David know in case he was in danger. Love is thoughtful, love would keep its object out of harm's way; therefore, as we love any, let us try to preserve them from sin, let us endeavour to warn them when temptation is near, that they may not fall by the hand of the enemy.

24—27. *So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?*

David was the son of Jesse, but he was Saul's own son-in-law; yet, out of contempt, the angry king calls him "the son of Jesse."

28—30. *And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Beth-lehem: and he said, Let me go, I pray thee; for our family hath a sacrifice in the city; and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there: and now, if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren. Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness?*

He was in such a passion that he began to abuse his own wife, the mother of his own son. In the East, if you want to sting a man most severely, give ill names to his mother; and surely, in the West as well, if anyone has anything to say against a man's mother, it cuts her son to his heart if he is what he ought to be.

31. *For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die.*

Saul knew that David, and not Jonathan, was to succeed him on the throne. He gives Jonathan warning of that fact, yet seeks his rival's life.

32. *And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?*

Very reasonable questions, very properly put.

33—42. *And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame. And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field at the time appointed with David, and a little lad with him. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. But the lad knew not anything: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.*

Behold the love of Jonathan and David! Here was a brother born for adversity, who clung to his friend in the day of danger, and even jeopardized his own life that he might defend David. Let us see here a faint emblem of what our great Friend, the Lord Jesus, has done for us.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE PHYSICIAN PARDONS HIS PALSIED PATIENT.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 3RD, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Thursday Evening, October 3rd, 1889.

"And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house."—Matthew ix. 2—7.

I REMARKED in the reading that the Gospel of Matthew is especially the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the King. All through Matthew's writing, the title of King constantly occurs in connection with Christ, and his kingliness is prominent from the opening chapter to the close. Here we see the King exercising his royal prerogatives. In this passage we have several instances of Christ acting as he could not have acted if he had not possessed a royal and divine power.

I. I will go at once to my text, and note, first, that JESUS DEALT WITH THE PALSIED MAN IN A TRULY ROYAL AND DIVINE WAY.

The bearers of the man sick of the palsy had broken through the tiling, whatever that may have been, to get him near the Saviour. They had dropped him down over the heads of the eager throng, and there he lay upon his pallet before Christ, unable to stir hand or foot, but looking up with that gaze of eager expectancy which Christ so well understood.

You will notice that our Lord did not wait for a word to be spoken, he simply looked, and *he saw their faith.* Matthew writes, "Jesus seeing their faith." Who can see faith? It is a thing whose effects can be seen, its signs and tokens are discoverable; and they were eminently so in this case, for breaking up the roof, and putting the man down before Christ in so strange a way, were evidences of their belief that Jesus would cure him. Still, Christ's eyes not only saw the proofs of their faith, but the faith itself. There stood the four men,

speaking with their eyes, and saying, "Master, see what we have done! We are persuaded that we have done the right thing, and that thou wilt heal him." There was the man, lying on his bed, looking up, and wondering what the Lord would do, but evidently cheered by the belief that he was now in a position of hope where, in all probability, he would become a man favoured beyond everyone else. Christ not merely saw the looks of this man and his bearers; but he saw their faith.

Ah, friends, *we* cannot see one another's faith! We may see the fruit of it. Sometimes we think that we can discern the lack of it; but to see the faith itself, this needs divine sight, this needs the glance of the eye of the Son of man. Jesus saw their faith; and now, to-night, that same eye is looking upon all in this audience, and he sees your faith. Have you any that he can see? "Oh, yes!" some of you can reply, "we have a humble, trembling faith; not such as it ought to be, but such as we are very thankful to possess." Some of you, it may be, are conscious of your sin to-night; and all the faith you have is just a faint hope, a feeble belief that, if he will but speak to you, you shall be forgiven. You believe that he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him; but you have in the background a fear that you cannot come, or that you may not come in a right way. Still, if it is ever so little faith in him that you have, my Master sees it; and, as in our early days we used to look for a single spark in the tinder that we might get a light on the cold mornings, so does the Lord look for the tiniest gleam of faith in any human heart, that out of it may come a flame of spiritual life. "Jesus seeing their faith." Now then, my dear hearer, Christ's eye is looking at you to-night. Whatever faith you have, exert it now; believe in Jesus. He is the Son of God; believe in him as able to save you, for he is able, and he is willing as well as able; and now trust your soul to him, sink or swim. Determine that, if you must die, you will die at the foot of Christ's cross; but you will go nowhere else for salvation. "Jesus seeing their faith." His royal and divine sight could perceive that which was hidden from all mere mortal men.

But then, when Jesus saw their faith, observe next that *he dealt first with the chief evil which afflicted this man.* He did not begin by curing him of the palsy. That was bad enough; but sin is worse than the palsy, sin in the heart is worse than paralysis of every single muscle. Sin is death, but something worse than death; therefore, Christ, at the very beginning of this miracle, to show his lordship, his royal, his divine power, said to the man, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." This was laying the axe at the root of the man's evil nature. This was hunting the lion, the biggest beast of all the foul creatures that lurked in the densest forest of the man's being. Christ's words drove the unclean animal from his lair, and by his almighty power rent him as though he had been a kid.

Now, at this time, you may have many troubles; and perhaps you are eager to spread them before the Lord. That sick child, your dear husband, who is at home ill, that business which is flagging and likely to fail, that disease of yours which is weakening you, and which makes you scarcely fit to be in the Lord's house to-night. Now, waive

all those things, for heavy as they are, they are inconsiderable compared with sin. There is no venom as poisonous as that of sin; this is the wormwood and the gall; this is the deadly fang of the serpent whose sting infects and inflames our whole being. If this evil be removed, then every ill has gone; therefore Christ begins with this, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." Breathe a prayer to him now for the forgiveness of your sin: "Jesus, Master, forgive me! With a word thou canst pardon all my sin; thou hast but to pronounce the absolution, and all my iniquities will be put away at once and for ever. O my Lord, wilt thou not put them away to-night?"

Notice, also, that *Jesus did absolutely forgive that man:* "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." He did not say, "They shall be forgiven," but, "They are forgiven; I absolve thee from them all. Whatever they may have been, thy youthful sins, thy manhood sins, thy sins before the palsy laid hold upon thee, thy sins of murmuring since thou hast been upon that bed, put them all together into one great mass, and though they be multitudinous as the stars of heaven, or as the sands on the seashore, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." And the man felt that it was so, he believed that it was so, a load was taken from his heart, his whole spirit was lifted up by that gracious word, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." I pray my Master to deal thus with some who are sitting in these pews very heavy at heart. May he speak right into the depths of your spirit, "Son, daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee! They are blotted out, they are all gone." Oh, what a dreadful time that is to a man when first he sees his sin! It is the darkest moment of his life; but it is a blessed moment when he sees that Christ has put away his sin, and has said to him, "You shall not die in your iniquities; for they are all forgiven." Everything grows light and bright round about him; he himself is like one who comes up out of a well, or out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, yea, out of the very belly of hell. He seems to leap all at once up to the throne of heaven as he sings, "My sins are all forgiven. I am a miracle of grace." Wonder not if the man can scarcely contain himself; marvel not if he runs, and leaps, and dances for very joy.

This is how Christ behaves towards poor, palsied, sin-bound men and women. He sees their faith, and then puts their sin away where it shall be seen no more for ever, for he is a King, he is God, and he is able to forgive and blot out all iniquity. I have heard of one who, having been under a great sense of sin, and being relieved of it, could for a long time only cry out, "He is a great Forgiver." When there were other things to be attended to, he could not see to them, nor speak of any other kind of business but this, "He is a great Forgiver." I do not feel as if, to-night, I wanted to say anything else to you but this, "He is a great Forgiver. I have found him so; many here have found him so; and all who will trust his great atoning sacrifice shall also know that he is a great Forgiver."

II. The second division of my subject diverges a little from the first; but it follows the text, and so it is no real divergence. By his royal and divine power, CHRIST READ AND JUDGED MEN'S THOUGHTS.

See those Scribes, those students of the letter of the Word, who

know how many letters there are in every Book of the Old Testament, and have counted them so accurately that they can tell which is the middle letter. Wonderfully wise men those! Do you see them? They are very vexed and angry; and they think hard thoughts of Christ. They did not dare to speak out what they thought; the people would not have listened to them just then if they had spoken, so they held their tongues, but they did not hold their hearts, and there was a Thought-reader there,—not one who professed the art, but One who possessed it,—and he heard where the quickest ear would have failed to detect the faintest sound. Jesus heard the Scribes mentally say, "This." If you look at your Bibles, you will find that the word "*man*" is printed in italics, and that the Scribes said within themselves, "This", they meant, "fellow",—they meant any black name that you like to put in, "This blasphemer." They would not say what they thought him; they did not like to call him anything but just "This. . . . . This offscouring."

Thus, *Christ read their contempt of himself.* They had not uttered it; but he had heard it. It is an awful thing to have a silent contempt of Christ. You may pride yourself on saying, "I have never spoken anything against religion; I have never used a profane expression." No; but if you do not call Jesus your Lord, if you do not own him as your Saviour, he knows what the contemptuous omission means. What you do not say, though you only say "This———," and leave a blank space; he reads it all. If there are any here, who have such thoughts of my Lord and Master, I do not wish to know them, and I hope that they will never let any other creature know them; but let them remember that Jesus knows all about them, for he is a King who reads the secrets of all hearts, and in due time he will lay them bare.

But, next, *Jesus marked their charge of blasphemy.* They said in their heart that he blasphemed, for he had taken to himself the prerogative of God. According to Mark and Luke's accounts, they asked, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?" Now, mark you, we who worship Christ as God can never have any fellowship with those who deny his Godhead, nor can they have any fellowship with us; for if he be indeed the Son of God, then they blaspheme him who deny it; and if he be only a man, then we are clearly idolaters and man-worshippers, and he did blaspheme. We are obliged to confess that, and we do confess it; if he was not the Son of God, if he had not power to forgive sins, then they rightly judged that he was a blasphemer. Ah, my hearer, when thou art afraid that Jesus cannot forgive thy sins, thou art trembling on the very verge of blasphemy! There is such a crime as constructive treason; and there is such a sin as constructive blasphemy. To deny Christ's power to save, is to make him but a man; and if thou puttest him down as only man, thou blasphemest. Even though thou mayest not intend to utter blasphemy, there is the shadow of its dark presence even in that unbelief of thine.

Notice, also, how *Jesus judged their thoughts.* He said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" It was their hearts rather than their thoughts that were evil. Intellectual error generally

springs from an unrenewed heart. And what evil had these men thought? They had thought him a blasphemer; they had also thought contemptuously of him; but the greatest evil of all was that they had limited his power; they did not believe that he could forgive. They thought it blasphemy on his part to profess to have the power to forgive the sins of men.

Now, my dear hearer, I know that you would shrink from openly blaspheming Christ, that is, if you are the person I think you are. Then, however great thy sin at present is, do not make it more by insinuating that he cannot forgive you, for of all sins this must be the most cruel, to think that he is unable to forgive. This stabs at Christ's Saviourship, which is his very heart. If thou sayest, "I am very guilty," say it again, for thou sayest the truth; but if thou sayest, "I am so guilty that he cannot forgive me," I pray thee to withdraw that wicked word, lest thou shouldst limit the Holy One of Israel, and he should have to say to thee, "Wherefore thinkest thou evil in thy heart?" It is thinking evil of Christ to imagine that he cannot forgive. I mean this word for the very worst man in the world. If thou art now the blackest soul out of hell, if thou art at this moment the most guilty and the most condemned of all the myriad offenders of our ruined race, yet I charge thee not to add to thy past sin this further evil of doubting Christ's power to save even thee; but come as thou art, and cast thyself at his feet, and say, "Let all thy power to save be shown in me; I the chief of sinners am, and here thou hast an opportunity of showing the greatness of thy power to pardon."

And observe, once more, that, in dealing with these Scribes, our Lord spoke right royally and divinely to them, for *he revealed the unreasonableness of their thoughts*. He said to them, "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" I ask you who are here to-night if you know any reason why Christ cannot forgive sin? Will anyone here, who doubts his power to pardon, find a reason for that doubt? If thou believest (and I will assume that thou dost believe) that he is the Son of God, can he not forgive sin? If thou believest that he did heal the lepers, and the paralyzed, and even raised the dead, can he not forgive sin? Further, if thou believest that he died for sin, that on the cross he offered no less a victim than himself, wherefore dost thou think that he cannot forgive? If thou believest that he rose again from the dead,—and I know that thou believest this,—if indeed he rose again from the dead for the justification of the ungodly, how is it that he cannot forgive? And if he has gone into glory, and thou knowest that he is at his Father's right hand, and there is making intercession for the transgressors, how canst thou say that he cannot forgive thee? "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts" in limiting my Master's power? He can forgive every one here present; he can forgive every soul in whom he sees faith in himself, whoever he may be, and however dire his guilt.

III. Now we come back to the palsied man and our Master again, and notice, in the third place, that right royally JESUS OPENLY DECLARED HIS COMMISSION. He seems to me to read the letters patent which his Father gave him when he sent him on his errand of love and mercy: "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

First, *Jesus is the Son of man.* He does not conceal that fact. One would have thought that he would have said, "I am the Son of God"; but here he chooses still to hold his Godhead in abeyance, so he says, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins. I, the Son of Mary, I, the carpenter's Son, I who dwelt at Nazareth thirty years, I who have gone up and down among you, worn with sufferings, pained by your hostility, wearied by labour for you, I, the Son of man, have power to forgive sins." Think of that. He puts himself on his very lowest standing, and declares that, as the Son of man, there is bestowed upon him, by reason of his Godhead, the power to forgive sins.

And having thus declared his title, he goes on to say that *he forgives sins as the Son of man on earth.* He was on earth, and he had power on earth; that is, in his earthly life, in his humiliation, when he had made himself for a while to be less than the Father, so that he could say, "My Father is greater than I,"—higher in office just then,—when he had humbled himself, and taken upon himself the form of a servant, he could say, "The Son of man hath power on earth, at his lowest, divested of glory, here as a Man among men, the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Oh, how I love this word, for if he had power on earth, what power he has in heaven; and if he had power as the Son of man, what power he has as God and Man in one person! Oh, how fully you may trust him! Even the Christ whom they could see, the Son of man,—for you know that there was a Christ whom they could not see, that Son of God whom carnal eyes could not behold, who must reveal himself spiritually or be unperceived by mortal sense,—even he whom they could see, the Christ whom you poor weeping ones can see, though you cannot see the half of Christ, nay, you cannot see the hundredth part of Christ,—the Christ whom you poor doubters can see, the Christ whom you who are all but blind can only see out of the corners of those eyes of yours when you see men as trees walking,—even that Christ, the Son of man, in his weakness on earth, was able to forgive sins. I do not seem as if I ought to try to preach about this glorious truth; but I feel that I ought to state it, and leave it as a solemn fact for you to reject at your peril if you dare; or to receive with gladdest joy; for, believe me, your only hope lies here. O guilty sons of Adam, here is the way of escape for you! Your father Adam has ruined you; but the Son of man has come to seek and to save you, and he declares that he has power on earth to forgive sins.

Now, notice, in this blessed unrolling of his commission as the Son of man, how *Jesus cheers the sad.* He said to the poor palsied man, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." How this should comfort you who are sad on account of sin! It is the Son of man who can forgive you. You tremble at the greatness of God, you are afraid of his majesty; but this Son of man, your Brother, whose hands were pierced with the nails, and whose feet still wear the nail-prints, whose side has the gash that the spear of the soldier made, he it is who can forgive sins. How tenderly he comes to you! How gently does he deal with you! Here is a hand fit for a surgeon, of whom it is said that he must have an eagle's eye, and a lion's heart, but a lady's

hand. Here is a hand of flesh, a dainty, tender hand of love, that brings to you pardon. You have not to encounter God absolutely; but the one Mediator comes in between God and men. He who is bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh, says to you, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." And this makes our hearts cheer up when they are sorrowing on account of sin.

Beside that, *Jesus assures the forgiven that he has forgiven them.* How I love to think of that blessed fact, that Christ does not forgive us, and keep his forgiveness in the dark, but he says, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," giving the assurance of forgiveness to the sinner whom he forgives! The realization of pardon is a delightful feeling. It is not worth while to sin, whatever comes of it; I cannot say, with Augustine, "*Beata culpa!* Blessed fault!" but oh, if there is a joy outside of heaven that is higher than all others, it is the joy of a sinful soul when divine forgiveness is granted, making the forgiven one whiter than the driven snow, and fresher than the morning dew. I am a forgiven man, wonder of wonders! I, who have broken all God's laws, and brought upon me Jehovah's wrath, am pardoned for all my transgressions. God's Son has said it, and his word is sure and steadfast, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee."

I think that men would readily give up all the pleasures of this world, and count them as nothing, if they could but know the bliss of forgiven sin. Oh, if any man, who says that he loves a merry laugh, did but once know what it is to be reconciled to God, he would count that he never before enjoyed real merriment, or understood true mirth. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as I have said, makes us drink of the sweetness of forgiveness. It is not merely that he burns the books that recorded our indebtedness; but he tells us that he has done so. He says, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

Thus it was that Christ publicly unrolled his divine commission, declaring that he had power on earth to forgive sins. He came here on purpose to forgive human guilt; not to condemn, nay, not even to condemn her who was caught in the act of adultery. "Neither do I condemn thee," said he; "Go, and sin no more." Jesus came not to condemn the thief who was dying on the cross, and confessing that he deserved so to die; nay, but he said to him, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It is Christ's business to pardon; it is his bliss to pardon; it is his glory to pardon. He came here on purpose that he might pardon the guilty. Oh, that all sinful ones would go to him for forgiveness!

IV. After having thus declared his commission, let us note, in the fourth place, that JESUS EXHIBITED HIS CREDENTIALS.

Since the Scribes disputed his power to pardon, he gave them a practical proof that he could forgive, and I want your special attention to this point. He said to them, in effect, "To forgive sin is a divine act. Now, whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?" I put it to you, dear friends, which is the easier of the two? Mark that Jesus does not ask, "Which is the easier, to forgive sin, or to heal the palsy?" No; he said, "Whether is easier, *to say*, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or *to say*, Arise, and walk?"

Well, now, *the first is much the easier*, because there are a great

many who can say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and you cannot see whether the sins are forgiven or not. Look at the number of those who call themselves priests, who say, after they have heard the penitent's confession, "I absolve thee." It is easy enough to say that; but who is to know whether that person, who has professed penitence, is absolved or not? There is no change apparent to the observer; the poor sinner who is told that he is absolved may credulously derive some delusive comfort from his fellow-sinner's words; but those who look on cannot see any difference in the man or woman coming back from the confessional from what they were when they went there. It is very easy to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; any fool can say it, any knave can say it; but then, if you say, "Arise, and walk," suppose they do not rise and walk, what then? Anybody can stand there, and say to the man sick of the palsy, "Arise, and walk," and the man may make an effort to rise, but fall back as helpless as ever; so that, although both miracles are, in themselves, equally impossible to man, and equally require divine power, yet the saying of the one is easy enough, but the saying of the other is more difficult. Many an impostor would shrink from saying, "Arise, and walk," for he would be mightily afraid that it would be found one thing to say it, and quite another thing for the patient really to rise and walk. Thus Christ said to the Scribes, "I will prove to you that I am divine, and therefore that I have the power to forgive sins, for I will now perform a miracle which you shall see, and which you shall be quite unable to dispute. It shall be wrought before you all, and then you shall know that, as I could do what was evidently the harder thing, that is, say, 'Arise, and walk,' I had the right to say what has become the easier thing, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee.'"

"Then saith he to the sick of the palsy," while he lay there, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Thus *Jesus marked out the miracle in detail.* It was necessary to pile up the argument to make it complete and overwhelming. First, "Arise, sit up, stand up." The man could not do that if the palsy was still upon him; but at once, "He arose." "Now roll up thy mattress." He stoops down, and you can see him rolling it up; he has it now under his arm, or on his shoulder. "Now," is Christ's next command, "Go unto thine house," and he walks straight away off to his home. Of course, in modern times, we make exhibitions of converts; and we should have taken this man up and down the streets, to show him off as a trophy; but the Saviour does much better than that. For him to go home to his house, was a clearer proof of being cured than for him to remain with Christ, for it might be supposed that, while he was with the Saviour, some strange influence emanating from the great Physician kept him in a state of excitement and up to the mark. So Christ says, "Go home to thine house, to every-day life, just as anybody else might do, go along with you, bed and all;" and off he goes. Every point of detail was necessary to make it clear that this was a real, radical, complete cure, and that the Christ who could work such a miracle was able also to forgive sin.

I remark, next, that *change of nature is the best proof of the pardon of the sinner.* You may come to me to-night, and say, "Sir, I am for-

given." I am glad to hear it; but how will you behave at home to-night? "I am forgiven," cries one, all of a sudden, under a sermon, as if electrified. Yes, yes; and you want to stop with us, do you, and never go home any more? That will not do, because such a cure as that could not be a perfect, business-like, common-sense cure. Go home to your house. Your moral actions, your temperance, your honesty, your chastity, your obedience to parents, your good conduct as a servant, your generosity as a master, these will not save you; but unless we see them, how are we to know that Christ has wrought a miracle upon you; and if he has not wrought a miracle upon you in raising you up from the palsy of sin, how do we know that he has forgiven you? In fact, we do not know it, and we do not believe that he has, for these two things go together, the one as the evidence of the power that wrought the other. If you have been forgiven, you have been renewed. Sitting in this place to-night, you may be forgiven all your sin; but if you are, you will not be to-morrow what you have been to-day. The drunkard's cup will not be lifted to your lips any more; the company of the lascivious will not be pleasant to you again; no oath, no profane speech, no foolish talk will come out of your mouth henceforth. Christ forgives you outright, not because you are cured of your evil habits; but he forgives you while you are still palsied; and the evidence that you are forgiven, the harder thing as the world will always judge it to be, is your taking up your bed, and walking home, quitting all your former sloth, for it will be sloth from this time. The bed which you could not help lying upon once, will become the couch of sloth to you if you lie on it any longer. You will take that up, and you will walk back, and be a man of activity, at your daily labour, in your own house, henceforth as long as you live.

Do notice this, dear hearers. We do not preach to you salvation by works; but when you are forgiven, then the good works come. The same Christ who makes you a new creature pardons your sin; you cannot have half a Christ, you must have Christ the Healer as well as Christ the Forgiver. If Christ could be cut up into lots, we could sell him off immediately; but if he is to be taken all at once as a Sin-killer as well as a Sin-forgiver, there are always some who will fight shy of him. I pray that not one of you may be of that kind.

I think, also, that *the detailed obedience that the Saviour required was the best evidence that he had forgiven the man's sin:* "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." Henceforth, to do everything that Christ bids you do, in the order in which he bids you do it, because he bids you do it, to do it at once, to do it joyfully, to do it constantly, to do it prayerfully, to do it thankfully, this shall be the token that he has indeed dealt with you as a pardoning God. O my dear hearers, I am afraid that there are some, who profess to have been forgiven, who are not as obedient to Christ as they ought to be! I have known them neglect certain duties; I even knew a man once, who would not read some parts of the Word of God because they made him feel uneasy; but be you sure of this, that when you and the Word of God fall out, the Word of God has right on its side. There is something rotten in the state of Denmark when you cannot read a chapter without feeling that you wish that it was not there. If there is any

verse that you would like left out of the Bible, that is the verse that ought to stick to you, like a blister, until you really attend to its teaching. There is something wrong with you whenever you quarrel with the Word of God. I say again, that detailed obedience is the surest evidence that the Lord has forgiven your sin. For instance, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Do not you omit any part of that precept; and if Christ bids you come to his table, and thus remember him, do not live in neglect of that command. At the same time, remember to live soberly, righteously, honestly, godly, in this present evil age; for if you do not, if there is not a detailed obedience, there may be a fear that, after all, the Lord has never said to you, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

And, last of all, *the best evidence is always seen at home:* "Take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." If there is a place where piety is best seen, and best judged of, it is upon the family altar. What the man is at home, that he really is; what the woman is in her own house, that she is truly. It is very easy, you know, to masquerade in society, to seem to be something very wonderful upon the boards of the world's theatre, and then not to be in reality the king that you seemed to be; but, after all, to be only a very sorry specimen of humanity. "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." One said to me, this very day, of a certain man, "Do you think, sir, that he was a good man?" I said, "Well, brother, I think that he was a good man of a very bad sort." I did not know how to put the truth more charitably. I remember an old woman, who went to hear a minister of a certain creed that she did not like, though he preached uncommonly well; and when she came out, they asked her how she got on with the preacher. She replied, "Well, he is one of the best of a very bad make." Now, I do not like to have to say that of anybody who professes to be a Christian; and it should not be so. No; and I do not want you to be the worst of a good make, either; though that, perhaps, is better than being the best or the worst of a bad make. We want to be such that we can bear the fullest inspection.

"Ah!" says one, "I came here seeking the pardon of sin, and now, sir, you have got off to moral conduct." Quite so; and that is where I want you to get off to. Seek the pardon of sin to-night; it is to be had, as I have told you, by faith: "Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee." But if you want to make sure that Christ is really able to forgive your sin, the very best evidence to you, and the only evidence to the outside Scribes, will be that you take up your bed, and walk. "Oh!" say you, sometimes, "I have many sins still; but I am not what I used to be. I am a changed man at heart; I could not bear what I once enjoyed, I could not do what I once commonly did, and the things that I loathed and despised are now delightful to me." I am glad that it is so with you, and I pray that it may be so with all my hearers. May God work that great and gracious change in many who are in this Tabernacle to-night, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MATTHEW VIII. 23—34, AND IX. 1—13.

Matthew's Gospel is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and of the King. Here you see the King amid the storms of nature.

Matthew viii. Verses 23, 24. *And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.*

In the quiet confidence of faith, resting upon his God.

25, 26. *And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

As great a calm as there had been tempest. After great trouble, expect deep, delightful rest and peace, if you are a child of God.

27. *But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*

Now see the King in conflict with the powers of darkness.

28—31. *And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him,*

How the demons crouched at his feet! The dogs of hell knew the power of his tongue; that was a whip whose lash they had felt before.

31, 32. *Saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go.*

He never wastes words on demons.

32—34. *And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

A sad prayer; yet Jesus granted their request. Men may once too often ask the Holy Spirit to depart from them. They may grieve him once more, and then he will have done with them for ever.

Now we shall see the King in conflict with the diseases of mankind, and with human sin.

Matthew ix. Verses 1, 2. *And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith—*

The faith of the bearers, and the faith of the palsied man himself,—

2. *Said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*

It was remarked, by a mediæval writer, that we do not find Christ calling any of the apostles, not even the very chief of them, by the name that he gave to this palsied man, "Son." This is the title that he gives to a sin-sick sinner, lying on a bed before him, waiting to be healed. Oh, the tenderness of Christ to sin and misery! He puts a kind of sonship upon this man which he had not possessed before.

3. *And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.*

"He arrogates to himself the prerogative of God. Who can forgive sins but God only?"

4—8. *And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house. But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.*

They rightly saw in this miracle, wrought by Christ, power given to man; for, as you observe, Christ said, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" and these people magnified God that one Man should have such power granted to him. There is an elevation to the whole of manhood in the alliance of Christ with it; through him the Lord hath given great power unto men.

9. *And as Jesus passed forth from thence,*

The King is now going to show his power over the human will.

9. *He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.*

Everything bows before him. Is he not King of kings, and Lord of lords? Have we ever comprehended the true measure of his divine and human nature? Even when he was on earth, and known as the Son of man, what gleams of his divine glory shone forth in these truly royal acts of his! Yet how condescending was our King! Where is his court? Who are his attendants? Listen,—

10. *And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.*

Lord of the sea, Conqueror of demons, Healer of the sick, Forgiver of sin, and now he has for his company publicans and sinners! When the Pharisees saw it, they did not see condescension in it, but they saw wickedness in it.

11. *And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?*

Ah! why, indeed? You and I know; that is a secret that has made us love him better than almost anything beside.

12. *But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.*

He has come here on purpose that he might heal our sicknesses. Oh, you who feel to-night sick with sin, and sick of sin, come and sit down with him! He said, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out," and he will not cast you out, notwithstanding your sinnership, if you come unto him by faith.

13. *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

Let us never forget that Jesus is the sinner's Saviour. He does not come to save saints; he comes to save sinners, and the saints who are saved are kept from becoming sinners by his almighty love.

May God bless this reading of the Scriptures to us! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—435, 377, 394.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE CRISIS OF THIS WORLD.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 10TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 6th, 1889.

"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die."—John xii. 31—33.

OUR Lord passed through his passion in a kind of rehearsal before it came. He saw those Greeks, who came to Philip, and whom Andrew and Philip brought to him, and his heart was flushed with joy. This was to be the result of his death, that the Gentiles would be gathered to him. That thought reminded him of his approaching decease. It was very near; only a few days would elapse, and then he would die upon the cross. In anticipation of Calvary, his soul was full of trouble; not that he feared death, but his death was to be a very peculiar one. He was to die the Just for the unjust; he was to bear our sins in his own body on the tree; and his pure and holy soul shrank from contact with sin. To stand in the sinner's place, to bear his Father's wrath, this bewildered him. He was very faint of heart, and he cried, "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." Without any wicked weakness, he proved how truly human he was; without any sinful repining at his Father's will, he saw how terrible that will was, and he shuddered at what it included. This was a kind of rehearsal for Gethsemane; it was a sipping of that cup whereof he was to drink until his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground, while his whole soul poured out the agonized petition, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

When our Lord Jesus was in this great distress of mind, in anticipation of the terrible sufferings he was about to endure, his Father spoke to him; and when you are in your direst distress, God will speak to you. If you are his child, when the weakness of your flesh seems ready to prevail over your spirit, you, too, shall have a reassuring voice out of the excellent glory even as your Master had. He seemed

to recover himself at once, and bracing himself up, he indulged his heart again with a vision of the glorious result of his death. Then he uttered the happy words on which we are to meditate to-night, in which he summed up the consequences of his death in these three points: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Let us, first, to-night, *consider the threefold result of Christ's death:* and when we have done that, let us *think about Christ's death as it is described in our text.*

I. First, let us CONSIDER THE THREEFOLD RESULT OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

There is, first, *the judgment of the world:* "Now is the judgment of this world." If you like, you may read it "crisis", for that is the Greek word used here: "Now is the crisis of this world." The world is sick, it grows worse; and the physician says that its malady has come to a climax, it is a case of kill or cure. There was a crisis in the world's disease, and that crisis was when Christ died; his death was the turning-point, the hinge of the world's history. There have been many hinges in history; every nation has a hinge in its history: the cross of Christ was the hinge of the world's history, it had reached the turning-point. I thank God that the death of Christ was the future death of sin. When he died, the arch-enemy received his death-stroke. That death was the bruising of Christ's heel; but in that death he bruised the old serpent's head. Now there is hope for the world; its crisis is passed. Now will the gods of the heathen fall; now will the dark ignorance of men yield to the Light of the world. After this crisis, there shall come a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; for Christ's first coming is a pledge of his second coming, wherein he will exterminate sin, and make the wilderness and the solitary place to blossom as the rose. Thus we may render our Saviour's words, "Now is the crisis of this world," the turning-point, the hinge on which all its history hangs. Still, I greatly prefer to keep to our old version, which is a translation, whereas mine is only a borrowing of the original word "crisis."

"Now is the judgment of this world." This means that, when Christ died, the world that lieth in the wicked one, the ungodly world, was judged in this sense; first, it was convicted of being guiltiest of the guilty. I daresay you have heard people use pretty phrases about the dignity of human nature, and so on. They are lying phrases; for human nature is as bad as it can be. If you want the proof of that assertion, behold how God himself came here among men, incarnate virtue robed in love! Did men love him? Did they fall down before him, and do him homage? The homage of the world was, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" The world hates virtue; it cannot bear perfection; it might endure benevolence, but absolute purity and righteousness it cannot, away with. Its native instincts are wrong; it is not towards the light that men are going, their backs are to the sun, they are journeying into the thick darkness.

And, next, the world was convicted of the stupendous crime of murdering the Son of God. I will not call it regicide, but deicide;

and this is the crime of crimes. Truly was the world guilty of all that prophets ever charged it with, and much more. When wicked men slew the Prince of life, the Holy One and the Just, then was it proven that the world is at heart atheistic, that it hates God, and would put God himself to death if he were within its grasp. Thus did men put the Incarnate God to death when he submitted himself to their power. You need not talk about the virtues of the world; it slew the Christ, and that is enough to condemn it. We want no other proof of its guilt; you cannot bring evidence more complete and overwhelming than this, they slew the Lord of life and glory, they said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours."

Christ's death was the judgment of this world, next, by sentencing the world; for if Christ, who was perfectly innocent, must die when he stood in the sinner's place, what think you, O guilty men, will not you also die? If the Well-beloved of heaven, bearing nothing but imputed guilt, sins not his own, must nevertheless be smitten of God and afflicted, and a voice must be heard, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts;" if he must die on yonder cruel tree, if he must cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" then, be sure of this, there is wrath treasured up against the day of wrath, and no soul of man that doeth evil shall go unpunished. Is there not a God who is the Judge of all the earth, and who must do right? If it be right to smite the Innocent, who assumed the place of the guilty, it must surely be right that the truly guilty should die the death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." So there was not only the conviction, but also the sentence of the world, when Jesus died.

And more than that, there is the final ending of the trial when the world rejects Christ. As long as you are here, my hearers, and Christ is preached to you, there is hope for you; but in that day when you reject Christ finally, and will have none of him, when you cry, "Away with him, away with him! We will not be washed in his blood, we will not be clothed in his righteousness;" in that day you seal your doom, and there remains no hope for you. There is one window in heaven, and through it streams the light of life; but if that be closed, no other will ever be opened. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." If you have for the last time put Christ away, if you have altogether done with him, you have ended your probation, you have finished your trial, you have put out your last candle, you are for ever doomed. When Christ is so rejected as actually to be made away with as he was upon the cross, then is the judgment of this world.

I wish that I had time to pause here to press these points upon you who belong to the world. There are but two parties, the world and the Church of God. If you are not of the Church of God, you belong to the world; and the world is judged by the death of Christ. If you are not a Christian, you are a member of that great corporation called the world. Men sometimes speak of a Christian world and an un-Christian world, a religious world and an irreligious world, a sporting world, a laughing world, a thieving world, a trading world; but all that is really of the world is outside the bounds of the Church of God.

He that believeth in Christ has escaped from the world. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," said Christ concerning his disciples; but to the unbelieving Jews he said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world."

Thus, you see that, as the first result of the death of Christ, the world is judged, the world is convicted, the world is sentenced for its rejection of Christ. A Christ-rejecting world is a doomed world; may none of you belong to that world!

The second result of Christ's death is *the casting out of Satan:* "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." He who holds sway over it shall now lose his throne. The prince of this world is Satan, the arch-enemy of God and of man; but he is not always to reign as the prince of the power of the air, the chief of the rulers of the darkness of this world. He is to be cast out of his present dominions.

By the death of Christ, Satan's accusations against believers are answered. One of the practices in which he most delights is that of accusing the people of God; and, alas! he has plenty of cause for his charges; but whenever he accuses us, our one answer is, "Jesus died." He says, "These people have sinned;" and we reply, "True; but Jesus died for them;" and the cross of Christ stops the mouth of the accuser. Even a feeble saint, looking up to his crucified and risen Saviour, can boldly sing,—

> "I may my fierce accuser face,
> And tell him thou hast died."

Next, Christ's cross spoils Satan of his universal monarchy. He could once lord it over the whole world, and he does very much of that even now; but there is a people over whom he cannot sway his evil sceptre, there is a race which has broken loose from him. They are free, and they defy him to enslave them again. They care not for his threats, they are not to be won by his blandishments; and though he worries and tempts them, yet he cannot destroy them. He can boast no longer of universal dominion. There is a seed of the woman that has revolted from him, for Jesus, by his death, hath redeemed them out of the hand of the enemy, and they are free. I heard a story of an old black woman, who was waiting upon a lady visiting friends in the South, some time after the last great war in America. The lady said to the black servant, "You may very well wait upon a Northerner with great attention, for it is through us that you are free." "Free, missy, free?" exclaimed the negress; "I's a slave. I was born a slave." "Oh, but you are free! Do you not know that there has been an Act passed by which you are all free?" "Yes, I did hear somet'ing about dat; and I said to old massa, 'I hear dat we is all free.' He says, 'Stuff and nonsense,' so I's bin stoppin' here workin' for him. Is it true, missy, that we is all free?" "Oh, yes!" she answered, "you are all free, every slave is free now." "Then," said the woman, "I don't bin serve old massa any longer; I bid him 'Good-bye.'" And so it is when Christ sets us free; we do not serve the old massa Satan any longer, we bid him "Good-bye."

When we are set free from the dominion of the devil, by the emancipating redemption of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Satan's

tyrannical power is crippled. He still has great influence, and he does his worst to injure the kingdom of Christ by persecution, by false doctrine, and by a thousand other methods; but Christ has broken his right arm, he cannot work as once he did; and more and more, as the fruit of the Redeemer's passion, will Satan's power be curtailed until, at last, he shall be utterly cast out, and the triumphant shout shall be heard, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Let us never imagine that the devil is going to conquer in the great battle between right and wrong. God's Word tells us plainly enough what his end is to be: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Now, if any of you suffer through Satan tempting you to despair, if he comes to some of you, and entices you to commit a sin which you hate, and against which you strive with all the might God gives you, if, by a mysterious force that you cannot comprehend, he seems to make you do otherwise than you would, take courage, and stand up against him, for when Jesus died, he said that, by his death, the prince of darkness was cast out, and so he is. Sin shall not have dominion over you, nor shall Satan either. Only be you bold in resisting him, claim your liberty as a child of God, and fight under the command of Christ, for the cross is the conquering banner for all who would overthrow the power of Satan.

"By all hell's host withstood;
We all hell's host o'erthrow;
And conquering them, through Jesu's blood
We still to conquer go."

The third result of Christ's death is *the central attraction of his cross*. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Christ on the cross has become the great magnet attracting men to himself. What did he mean by this saying? Did he not mean that his sphere of influence would be widened? "While I am here," said he, "I draw a few men to me; these fishermen have become my disciples, these Greeks have come to see me; but when I am lifted up upon the cross, I shall draw all men unto me, men of all sorts, men out of all nations, multitudes of men, not only of this one age, but of all ages, till the world shall end. I shall become the centre of a wider circle, a circle wide as the world. I shall draw all men unto me."

But why is it that Christ does draw men to himself? I answer that it is because, by dying on the cross, he gave a new and brighter display of his love. Men came to Christ because of his love while he walked the earth alive; little children especially did so; but after he had died that shameful death, how could they help coming to him? "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love." And to all the ages the masterpiece of love is the dying Christ praying for his enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Christ on the cross draws sinners to himself, Christ crucified attracts through the infinite love to men which is displayed in that death.

A part of the attraction lies in the wonderful blessings which come to us through Christ's death. We were drawn to him because we received pardon through his wounds, we came to him because we found eternal life through his death upon the tree. Jesus bore the sin of his people, he died in our stead; and by so doing he put away all our iniquities, blotted them out, cast them into the depths of the sea. Only as he was lifted up upon the cross could that be said to be the case; but when he was crucified, he finished trangression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Beloved, this is a great attraction to perishing sinners; it is a drawing of love to which they must yield. When Jesus thus attracts us, we run to him, because pardon and eternal life are to be found through his uplifting on the cross. I would that some here might be drawn to Christ at this moment by the mighty magnet of his death. Remember how the poet sings of the attraction of the cross,—

"So great, so vast a sacrifice
May well my hope revive:
If God's own Son thus bleeds and dies,
The sinner sure may live.

"Oh, that these cords of love divine
Might draw me, Lord, to thee!
Thou hast my heart, it shall be thine,
Thine it shall ever be!"

The death of Christ attracted to him multitudes of the sons of men because it expanded the hearts of his people. While he was alive and with them, they never burned with such enthusiasm as after he had died. One of the first effects of his death was the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon them, infusing them with new life, a holy fervour, and a sacred enthusiasm, which made them go unto the utmost ends of the earth, publishing among the Gentiles full redemption through his precious blood. Christ, when he was lifted up, made his followers disseminate themselves throughout all populations of the globe till their line went forth to the ends of the earth; and, like the sun o'er every clime, so did the gospel of Jesus Christ enlighten every nation under heaven. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Christ is the centre of mankind. He is the Shiloh, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. They shall come away from the abominations of Rome; they shall come away from the crescent of the false prophet; they shall come away from the idols of the dark places of the earth; they shall come away from infidelity and philosophy; and shall come crowding to his dear feet as they feel the marvellous magnetism of his atoning death.

These three things, then, resulted from the death of Christ, the wicked world was judged, the power of Satan was broken, and Christ was made the central attraction of sinners to himself; and that attracting power is working now. Oh, that these three wonders might be wrought in our midst to-night, according to our measure!

II. Now, in the second place, I want you, for a few minutes, quietly to THINK ABOUT THE DEATH OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST AS DESCRIBED IN OUR TEXT.

How much the Holy Spirit desires that we should read the Scriptures intelligently! He had recorded these words of the Lord Jesus, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." If that had been all, we might have asked,—Does that lifting up from the earth mean Christ's death? Does it mean his ascension, his going up from the earth till the cloud received him? Or does it mean our preaching of Christ, when we lift him up before men, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness? So, to avoid all question, the Holy Spirit added the thirty-third verse, "This he said, *signifying what death he should die.*" If there is anything that the Spirit wishes us to be specially clear about, it is all expressions that have to do with our Lord's death. Let us thank him for that comment inserted here, lest we should make any mistake upon so vital a subject.

Now looking at the words, I want you to notice that *Christ went to his death with a clear view of what it was to be.* There is many a man who has rushed into the battle, and died without any idea of what a gunshot wound would be, or what the piercing of a lance would be; but our Lord, as it were, took stock of his death, and looked it calmly in the face. He does not speak of it as barely death, but he describes the manner of it: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth." In his own mind, he had gone through the nailing to the wood, and he had come to the uplifting of that wood into the air, and the fixing of its socket in the ground, and in spirit he felt himself already hanging there, lifted up from the earth. Just think of this wondrous fact, as Dr. Watts puts it,—

> "This was compassion like a God,
> That when the Saviour knew
> The price of pardon was his blood,
> His pity ne'er withdrew."

Knowing that his death was to be by crucifixion, he did not turn from it; he set his face like a flint to endure all that "the cross" meant. He fully knew what it meant; but you and I do not. There are depths in his sufferings that must be unknown to us, but he knew them all; yet, with love that was strong as death, he went through it all for your redemption, O believer! Then, love him in return, with a resolute, determined consecration of thy whole being, yield thyself up to him, not spasmodically, but of love aforethought, to be wholly his. Somebody said to me, the other day, that all religion nowadays either suffered from paralysis or convulsions. I do not want you to have either of those complaints, though I like the convulsions better than the paralysis. Let us not have convulsed religion, but let us have strongly fixed principles, knowing what we have to do, and why we do it, and then, like the Saviour, let us go forward, expecting difficulty, expecting loss, expecting ridicule, but willingly and wilfully facing it all for his dear sake, as he, on his part, endured even the cross for our sake.

Notice, next, that though our Saviour knew the bitterness of his death, *he read its issues in another light.* "I, if I be lifted up,"—do you catch the thought? He does not merely mean lifted up on the cross, he means another kind of uplifting, he means being exalted. When

he was lifted up upon the cross, men thought it degradation; but he looked into his death as one looks into an opal, till he sees wondrous rainbows and flames of fire in the precious stone. So Jesus looked into his passion till he saw his glory. Down in the ruddy depths of that blood-cup, he saw that he was really being lifted up when men thought that he was being cast down. That crown of thorns was a more wondrous diadem than monarch ever wore. His cross was his throne. With his outspread hands, he ruled the nations; and with his feet fixed there, he trampled on the enemies of men. O glorious Christ, when I have had a vision of thy cross, I have seen it at first like a common gibbet, and thou wast hanging on it like a felon; but, as I have looked, I have seen it begin to rise, and tower aloft till it has reached the highest heaven, and by its mighty power lifted up myriads to the throne of God. I have seen its arms extend and expand until they have embraced all the earth. I have seen the foot of it go down deep as our helpless miseries are; and what a vision I have had of thy magnificence, O thou crucified One! As Jesus looked forward to his death, he saw more than we can even now see in it, and he perceived that it was his glory to be lifted up on the cross of Calvary.

Further, *he beheld in it the supply of our great need.* "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw." He saw that we were far away, and could not of ourselves come nigh; so he said, "If I am lifted up, I will draw them." He saw that we would not wish to come, that we should be so hard-hearted and stiff-necked that we would not come if we were called. "But," said he, "I from the cross will draw them. As a magnet draws the steel, I will attract them." Oh, think of the cross of Christ in that light! Some have thought that, if we preach the gospel, we shall always have a congregation. I am not sure of that; but if the gospel does not attract a congregation, I do not know what will. But Christ does not say, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to little Bethel, or to Salem." He says, "I will draw all men unto me," that is, to himself; and we only come to Christ because Christ comes to us. No man ever comes to Christ unless Christ draws him, and the only magnet that Christ ever uses is himself. I do believe that we slander Christ when we think that we are to draw the people by something else but the preaching of Christ crucified. We know that the greatest crowd in London has been held together these thirty years by nothing but the preaching of Christ crucified. Where is our music? Where is our oratory? Where is anything of attractive architecture, or beauty of ritual? "A bare service," they call it. Yes, but Christ makes up for all deficiencies. Preach Christ, and men will be drawn to him, for so the text says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." They are held back by Satan; but the cross will draw them. They are held back by despair; but the cross will attract them. They are held back by want of desire; but the cross will breed desire. They are held back by love of sin; but the cross will make them hate the sin that crucified the Saviour. "I will draw them. All sorts of men I will draw unto myself," says the crucified Christ. Thus he supplies our great need.

Observe, too, that *Jesus knew that he would live to exercise that attraction.* He says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth."—what

then? "Shall I be dead? No; I will draw all men unto me." He lives. Going to death, he expects to live, he glories in his life, he tells of what he means to do after he is risen from the dead. O glorious Christ, to look beyond thy death, and find comfort in thy risen life! Cannot you, my brothers, my sisters, sometimes look beyond the grave, and find comfort in what you will do in heaven? Oh, will we not in heaven glorify our Lord? In the anticipation of what we will then do in honour of our precious Saviour, let us now take up arms against our present trouble, borrowing our weapons from the armoury of the future after our earthly life is over.

Jesus saw, too (and here I must finish), that *the day would come when he would be surrounded by a mighty company*. Can you not see him? He is lifted up upon the cross, and he begins to draw; and men come to him, a few at Jerusalem—nay, did I say "a few"? Three thousand in one day! The Crucified has pierced their hearts, the Crucified has begotten faith in them, the Crucified has drawn thousands to himself. He is preached in Damascus, he is preached at Antioch, he is preached at Corinth, he is preached at Rome, and everywhere he draws sinners to himself, and great companies come to him. By-and-by, he is preached in far-off Britain; some pioneer evangelist finds a place in these islands where he can preach to the uncivilized the gospel of Christ, and Jesus draws them to himself. He draws men till, all over Rome's vast empire, Christ crucified is drawing them, from Cæsar's palace and from Cæsar's prison; from the slave at the mill to the senator who rules the city, Christ is drawing them. The kings who wear their crowns by permission of the Roman power, some of them bow before King Jesus, he is drawing them. The people on the isles of the sea, and on every coast, he is drawing them. And to-day he is still drawing them. From the sunny islands of the southern sea, from the far north of Greenland, from Africa, from China, from everywhere, he draws them more and more; and here, in this our favoured island, he has drawn myriads to himself; but the day shall come when that drawing power will begin to operate yet more freely. They shall run to him; they shall fly to him with swift wings, as doves fly to their cots; they shall come to him as on a sudden, till the Church shall cry in astonishment, "Who hath begotten me these? These, where had they been?" As the drops of the morning dew are seen, glittering like diamonds on every hedge, and on every blade of grass, when once the sun is up, so shall Christ's converts be, like Abraham's promised seed, "so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable." Christ's people shall be willing in the day of his power; and the great attraction by which they will be drawn to him will be his death on the cross. Oh, that he would draw many to himself to-night! Let this be our prayer to him,—

> "Dear Saviour, draw reluctant hearts,
> To thee let sinners fly,
> And take the bliss thy love imparts,
> And drink, and never die."

Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XII. 19—43.

Our Lord raised Lazarus from the dead; and this miracle made a great sensation among the people. They came to meet Jesus, waving palm branches before him, and all Jerusalem was on a stir.

Verses 19—22. *The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.*

These were probably Gentiles, who were staying at Jerusalem; perhaps, proselytes who had come up to the feast. They were touched by the common feeling; they desired to see this wonderful Man who had raised to life one who had been dead four days. They proceeded courteously; they went to one of Christ's disciples who, coming from Galilee of the Gentiles, would be likely to sympathize with them, and they sought an introduction to Jesus. This Philip obtained for them with the help of Andrew.

23. *And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*

He knew that the hour was come when he must die. Looking through the dark glass of death, he saw what its result would be, and he called it glory. These few Greeks were the advance guard of the great Gentile army of the Lord; he regarded their coming in that sense.

24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*

Telling them that the source of his glory would be his death. The reason why the people would hear of him, and come to him, was that he would be hanged on the cross. The grain of wheat, when put into the ground, if it remains as it is, will never increase; it must die if it is to bring forth fruit. What is death? The end of existence? None but thoughtless persons imagine that. Death is the resolution of any living substance into its primary elements. It is the division of the soul from the body; originally, it was the division of the soul from God. In a grain of wheat, death is the separation of the particles of which it is composed, that the life-germ may feed upon that which was provided for it. "If it die," in the true sense of the word, in being separated into its constituent elements, then "it bringeth forth much fruit." Christ's way to glory was through the grave; he must go down that he might mount to the throne.

25. *He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

Live for this world, and you shall lose this world and the next, too; live for the world to come, and you shall in the highest sense gain both worlds.

26. *If any man serve me, let him follow me;*

That is the best kind of service; to do what Christ did, and to do what Christ bids you do: "If any man serve me, let him follow me."

26. *And where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Follow Christ, then, to the cross; follow him to the grave; follow him in his humiliation; and then the Father will honour you even as he honoured his Son.

27. *Now is my soul troubled;*

Or, puzzled. This hour of his glory was the hour of his passion, too.

27. *And what shall I say?*

Such sorrow was in his heart that he asked, "What shall I say?" Great trouble brings astonishment, amazement, bewilderment with it; and the human soul of Christ felt as ours feels when in great agony.

27. *Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*

Nature suggests the cry, "Father, save me from this hour." Grace comes behind the flesh, being a little slower to speak; but it corrects the errors of the flesh, and says, "For this cause came I unto this hour."

28. *Father, glorify thy name.*

What a prayer! Jesus swallows up his temptation to escape the cup by this all-absorbing petition, "Father, glorify thy name."

28, 29. *Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered:*

They only heard the sound, and it was like thunder in their ears.

29. *Others said, An angel spake to him.*

They distinguished the sound of some one speaking; but they did not recognize the voice of God.

30. *Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*

"To make you believe that God is with me, and that I am his Son."

31—34. *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die. The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*

As if it could not be true that Christ, in his divine nature, abides for ever, and yet, as Man, could be lifted up to die. It was a sneering question, "Who is this Son of man?" Our Lord did not answer it, thus teaching us that some people are not worth answering. Instead of replying to their question, Jesus gave them a practical admonition.

35, 36. *Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.*

When people determine to reject Christ, he leaves them; why should he tarry where he is rejected? He "departed, and did hide himself."

37—41. *But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.*

Christ is in the Old Testament in many places where, as yet, even we have never seen him. I doubt not that he lies hidden away in many a Psalm, and many a prophetic utterance that has not yet been fully expounded, or even comprehended by our finite minds. Oh, for eyes to see him where he sits in his ancient state!

What a solemn fact this is, though, that God does allow men to be given over to blindness of eyes, and hardness of heart! I sometimes fear that it is so with this age. Men will not see; they will not believe; they are desperately set on scepticism, it has become a fashion with them. Like a torrent, it sweeps through the very churches that bear the name of Christ; my fear is God in his wrath may give up our land to this curse, and then where will our hope be?

42, 43. *Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.*

I wonder whether in this throng there are any of this kind, who do believe in Christ, and yet never come out and confess him because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God. If so, I venture to say that they are found among what are called the more respectable people, the men of light and leading, the chief rulers. Among the common people there is very little of this evil. They will generally confess what they believe, and bravely come forward to declare that they belong to Christ. It is the chief rulers, the gentlemen of the Sanhedrim, who, if they believe in Christ in their hearts, do not confess him, lest they should be put out of society, for they love the praise of men more than the praise of God.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—302, 313.

"THE SWORD AND THE TROWEL."

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BAPTISM ESSENTIAL TO OBEDIENCE.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 17TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 13th, 1889.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."—Mark xvi. 16.

IF our congregations were what they ought to be, it would be a very simple matter to preach, for a sermon would then only need to be like the orders given by a commanding officer to his troops, short, sharp, plain, clear, distinct. Our hearers would not want illustrations and metaphors; they would ask simply to be told what they must do to be saved; and the more plainly they could be told, the better pleased would they be. I am going to try this evening to preach that kind of sermon, sinking the preacher in the teller of good news, plainly speaking of the way of salvation. If you want to be saved, listen to my message. If you do not care for salvation, yet, mayhap, while you hear of it, you may be set a-longing, and God may bless you.

My text is preceded and followed by other important words, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The gospel, then, is for "every creature." Wherever there is a man, woman, or child, an intelligent creature, the gospel is to be preached to such a person. You who are gathered to-night are clearly within that description, and therefore the gospel is to be preached to you. But if we are commanded to preach it, it is implied that you are commanded to hear it. To hear it without attention, to hear it without resolving to obey it, will be useless work. Hear it, therefore, as I desire to preach it, remembering that Christ stands here to hear me preach, and to mark how you accept the message from himself that I am to deliver.

This gospel is sent to every creature because every creature needs it. Whether the creature knows it or not, he is lost, lost by nature, and lost by practice, too, so much lost that he cannot save himself; he needs to be saved. Will you all believe that? If you have not believed in Christ, you are lost, and you cannot save yourself; begin

by believing that fact. But then rejoice that there is sent to you a gospel which can save you, a gospel which is adapted and meant for the salvation of just such a person as you are; for to you God says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

My fellow-Christians, you who have believed in Christ, it is time for us to bestir ourselves, for we have not preached the gospel to every creature yet by a very long way. Some persons have never preached it to anybody; some, I mean, of the very persons who are commanded to preach it to every creature. A quaint preacher says that, if some of God's people were paid ten dollars an hour for all that they have done for their Lord, they have not earned enough yet to buy a cake of gingerbread; and I am afraid that statement is true. So very little have some persons done for the spread of the gospel, that the world is none the better for their being in it. Do I speak too severely? If I do, you can easily pass over what I say; but if not, if it be so that any here have never yet fairly and squarely told out the gospel of Jesus Christ, begin at once. When you get home to-night, tell out the gospel to your nearest relative; and go out to-morrow to your next-door neighbour, or to the friend whom you can most easily reach, and tell the good news that your Lord has revealed to you, and so help to preach the gospel to every creature. An army chaplain once said to the Duke of Wellington, "Do you think that it is of any use our taking the gospel to the hill tribes in India? Will they ever receive it?" The duke replied, "What are your marching orders?" That was the only answer he gave. Stern disciplinarian as that great soldier was, he only wanted marching orders, and he obeyed; and he meant that every soldier of the cross must obey the marching orders of Christ, his great Commander. Go ye, therefore, as far as ever your position and capabilities allow you, and tell to every creature the word of the gospel as it is recorded in my text, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

I want to do my part to-night as far as my feeble voice will permit me; and I will speak a few words, first, *concerning belief;* secondly, *concerning baptism;* and, thirdly, *concerning being saved.* We shall get the whole text clearly in considering those three points.

I. First, CONCERNING BELIEVING. This is the main point, this is the hinge of salvation, for he that believeth in Christ is not condemned; he that believeth in him hath everlasting life.

Now, concerning believing, let me ask, first, *What is to be believed?* Well, you are to believe that you have broken the law of God, and that consequently you are under condemnation; but that God, in his infinite mercy, has sent his Son Jesus Christ into the world that you might live through him. His Divine Son, his only-begotten Son, was born of Mary, as a man of the substance of his mother, feeling as we do, and was in all respects most truly man. Being here, he obeyed his Father's will; and when the time came, he gave himself up as a sacrifice for guilty men. He died, "the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Himself being without sin, he took upon himself the sin of his people: "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Being found with human sin imputed to him, he suffered in the room, and place, and stead of those whose sins

he bore. On the cross his blood was shed, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin, but by that shedding of blood he blotted out the iniquity of all those who put their trust in him. This is what you have to believe, that—

> "He bore, that you might never bear,
> His Father's righteous ire."

He was laid in the grave; and on the third day he came forth from the tomb, rising again for the justification of his people as he was crucified for their offences. After a while, he went up into the highest heaven, and he is now enthroned there, King of kings, and Lord of lords. He sitteth at the right hand of God, even the Father, and there he pleads and makes intercession for sinners. Believe this. "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." He is exalted on high, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. That is what is to be believed. I might go into a great many details; but I shall not do so to-night. The essence of what is to be believed is that Jesus Christ is given of God unto us, that by his death he might put away sin, and we might be reconciled to God, and that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

That I may answer this question better, let me correct it, or turn it into another, and then answer that. The question is not so much *what* is to be believed, as *Who is to be believed?* For, in very deed, the believing of a certain thing to be true, though that may be helpful, is not the whole of the matter. I, believing a thing to be true, trust myself to that truth; there is faith, the act of trust. But if we would be saved, we must trust a Person, we must trust the Lord Jesus Christ. You are not so much saved by believing a dogma, as by trusting a Person; you must believe the dogma, or you will not trust the Person; but, believing the doctrine, you then come, and put your trust in the Person about whom that doctrine is taught. If you would be saved, trust yourself with Jesus Christ. He, who died, ever lives, and "he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him." Saving faith is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting him truly, wholly, solely, constantly, trusting him *now*. Behold him, then, the Son of God, enthroned in glory; lay your soul and all its sins at his dear feet, and trust in him to save you, and he will do it.

Many will put a third question,—*Why is he to be trusted?* I should like to answer that by another,—Why is he not to be trusted? When one said to me, the other day, "I cannot trust Christ," I enquired, "Can you trust me?" And when the quick reply was, as it ought to be from a hearer to a minister, "Yes, sir, I do trust you," I said, "Well, then, you certainly can trust the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is infinitely more worthy of being trusted than ever I can be." Cannot trust Christ? That is a wonderfnl piece of Satanic delusion. I can say, to-night, that I can not only trust my soul to Christ, but that, if I had as many souls as there are grains of sand on the sea-shore, I could implicitly trust them all to him. Why should I not? He is "God over all, blessed for ever," and he is Man, tender and gentle; therefore he ought to be trusted. O my hearer, can you look the crucified Christ

in the face, and say that you cannot trust him? Can you see the bloody sweat in the garden, can you gaze upon the nailed hands and feet, and pierced side of this suffering Man, who is at the same time very God of very God, and can you then say that it is hard to trust him? Oh, no! He is so true, so noble, so generous, so faithful, that I beseech you to trust him, and to trust him now.

That raises another question,—*When is Christ to be trusted?* And the answer is, *Now.* He was never more worthy to be trusted than he is to-night, and you never more needed a Saviour than you do to-night. You are, perhaps, talking about trusting Christ at some future time. You tell me that you do not trust So-and-so, but that you hope to trust him one of these days. I will not give a penny for such a hope as that. No, friend; if at any future time you should deem Christ worthy of your confidence, he is worthy of your trust to-night, for he is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Just as you are, in that pew, or sitting in the aisle, Christ deserves your confidence; and I pray you to give it to him. Cast your guilty soul on him this very moment; live not another second in unbelief, for that unbelief is a slander on my Lord, a grievous injury to his dear, faithful love. Now, while the word is quitting my lip, as it reaches your ear, say and mean it, "I do believe; I will trust Jesus; I yield myself to Christ, and take him to be my Saviour."

"If I do that," says one, "*When will the blessing come?*" The text says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and the blessing will come at once. Swift as the lightning flash is the act which saves the soul. One moment, a man may be black with accumulated sin; the next moment, he may be white as the driven snow. It takes no time for God to blot out iniquity. We pass in an instant from death to life, from darkness into marvellous light. I am praying that, while I speak to you in feebleness, God may work with his almighty power, with that right hand that rent the Red Sea in twain, that the ransomed of the Lord might cross over dryshod. May he come, and save the people made ready by his grace for this night of his glorious power, leading them immediately to believe, and giving them at once, as the result of their faith, reconciliation to God and justification by Christ Jesus!

Here let me correct a mistake into which some people fall. They say, "Do you exhort us to believe?" I do, indeed, with all my heart. "But, sir, faith is the work of the Spirit of God." Yes, did I ever say that it was not? I insist upon it continually that, wherever there is any faith, it is wrought in us by the Spirit of God. But listen. Did I ever tell you the Spirit of God believed for us, or did you ever read anything in Scripture approximating to that statement? No, the Spirit of God leads us to believe, but *we* distinctly believe, and it is *our* faith that saves us; it is not that the Holy Spirit believes instead of us, and we lie still, like a man under the surgeon's knife. Oh, dear, no! Every faculty is awakened and aroused by the Spirit of God. We see that Christ can save, and we believe it. We believe that he will save, and we trust him to save us. It is our own act and deed, it cannot be anybody else's act and deed. You cannot believe for another; there can be nothing like sponsorship here;

and the Holy Ghost himself cannot believe for you. It is not written, "Let the Holy Ghost believe for you;" that would be absurd; but it is written, "Believe thou," "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." With thine own proper mind and heart thou must believe in Jesus Christ if thou wouldst be saved.

I do not know that I need say more concerning believing. I have often tried to explain it, I am afraid that I have not always made it as plain as I have intended. Only let me warn you not to say, "I understand the plan of salvation very well. Dear sir, I am sure I do; I do not need it explained to me, I understand it perfectly." My dear friend, it is one thing to understand the plan of salvation, and quite another thing to believe in Jesus Christ to the salvation of your soul. It is a pitiless night, the rain is pouring down, and here is a man, sitting out in the street, exposed to the ill weather, and he has got a plan of a house down there on the wet pavement, and he says, "I am all right; I understand the plan of a house quite well." You see, he is looking at the plan; he has a view of the front of the house, he knows where the windows and doors should be; and he has a ground plan, too; he can see where the kitchen is, and the passage to the kitchen, and he knows the arrangement of all the rooms. But, my dear fellow, you are getting wet through; the storm is raging, why do you not go into the house for shelter? "Do not talk to me," says he, "I understand the plan of a house very well." The man is a fool if he talks like that; everybody concludes that he is out of his mind; and what is he who is satisfied with understanding the plan of salvation, but who does not come to Christ, and put his trust in him? Come to him now, I beseech you. You who do not know so much about the plan of salvation, come to Jesus, come and trust him; trust him now.

II. Now, in the second place, a little CONCERNING BAPTISM: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Please observe that I did not make the text. Perhaps, if I had made it, I should have left out that piece about baptism; but I have had no hand in making the Bible, I am obliged to take God's Word as I find it, and here I read these words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "He that believeth *and is baptized* shall be saved." "Do not dwell on the baptism," says one; "leave that out." That is what you say, my dear sir; I cannot see your face, but I do not believe that you are my master. My Master is the Lord who taught holy men to write this Book, and I can only go by the Book; the Book has the baptism in it, so I must stick to the truth as it is in the Book: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

First, let me remind you that our Saviour's words teach us that *baptism follows faith:* "He that believeth and is baptized." Never neglect the order of things in the Bible. If God puts them one, two, three, do not you put them three, two, one. You never had a servant, I hope, who twisted your orders out of order. Did you ever say to her, "Mary, now go and sweep the parlour, and afterwards take the duster, and dust the table, and the shelves, and the books"? Did she come to you some time after, and say, "Madam, I have done as you commanded me; I dusted the table, and the shelves, and the books, and then I swept the room"? Every good housewife here

knows what would happen from turning her orders upside down in that fashion. Now, a great many in the Christian Church at the present day have put it thus: "He that is baptized and believeth." I am not one of those maidservants; I dare not turn my Master's orders upside down. You have no right to baptize people till they have believed in Christ as their Saviour. Remember how Philip put it to the Ethiopian eunuch when that worthy man said, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And if thou dost not believe with all thine heart, thou oughtest not to be baptized, thou hast no right to this ordinance of Christ unless thou art a Christian. "He that believeth and is baptized,"—that is the Scriptural order. Read the New Testament impartially, and you will always find that those who were baptized were believers. They believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then they were baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Next, I would have you notice that this matter of *baptism is often linked with faith.* Over and over again it is put so in the New Testament; and there are passages, which I will not quote to-night, in which baptism has a peculiar prominence given to it in connection with the work of salvation. It might have been put, "He that believeth and cometh to the communion-table shall be saved;" but it is not so written. Some churches have exalted what they call "The Holy Eucharist" into a very elevated position indeed, far beyond what Scripture has ever accorded to it, yet the Lord's supper has never had given to it in the Word of God the position of being put side by side with faith, as baptism is in this and other passages. I am not going to dwell upon that point to-night; I merely tell you what is the teaching of the New Testament. You shall give your own account of it if you please; but our appeal is "to the law and to the testimony."

This much also I must say, that *it is not possible that there can be anything saving in the baptism itself.* The act of applying water in any way whatsoever cannot wash away a single sin. That would be going back to the old covenant of works, the old ceremonies of the Mosaic law; all the washings under the law—and they were very many—never washed one sin away; nor can any washing in water take away the sin of any man. Even the tears of Christ are never spoken of as putting away sin; it is his precious blood alone that cleanses away the sin of men. In my text, while it says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," yet, when the condemnation is announced, it is simply, "He that believeth not shall be damned," and the matter of baptism is not mentioned, for there are many who believe, but who are not baptized, and who cannot be, as the dying thief, for instance, yet are they assuredly saved. Nevertheless, here stands my text, and I cannot alter it, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Why do you suppose that baptism is put into this prominent position? I think that it is for this reason, *Baptism is the outward expression of the inward faith.* He who believes in Christ with his heart confesses his faith before God and before the Church of God by being baptized. Now, the faith that speaks thus is not a dumb faith; it is

not a cowardly faith; it is not a sneaking faith. Paul puts the matter thus, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

But why is confession so necessary to prove true faith? I answer that it is necessary to the very existence of the Church of God; for, if I may be a believer, and never confess my faith, you may be a believer, and never confess your faith, and all round we should thus have a company of men believing, and none of them confessing; and where would be the outward ordinances of the Church of Christ at all? Where would be any minister? Where would be the setting up and growing of the kingdom of Christ? For a hundred reasons, it is absolutely needful for Christ's kingdom that the believer should openly confess his faith. Do you not see that? And hence baptism, being God's way of our openly confessing our faith, he requires it to be added to faith, that the faith may be a confessing faith, not a cowardly faith; that the faith may be an open faith, not a private faith; that so the faith may be a working faith, influencing our life, and the life of others, and not a mere secret attempt for self-salvation by a silent faith which dares not own Christ. Remember those words of the Lord Jesus, "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me" (and in that place it means, "he who does not confess me") "before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." There is, therefore, no regenerating efficacy about water, or about immersion, or about baptism in any shape or form; but it is needful as the outward visible expression of the inward spiritual faith by which the soul is saved.

And, dear friends, once more, *baptism is often the test of obedience.* He who believes in Christ takes him to be his Master as well as his Saviour; and Christ, therefore, says to him, "Go and do so-and-so." If the man refuses to do it, he thereby proves that he does not intend to be the disciple of the Master. "Oh!" says one, "you know that baptism is a non-essential." Have I not begged you to cease such idle and wicked talk as that? Have you a servant? Do you go to business early in the morning? Do you like a cup of tea at six o'clock, before you start for the city? The maid does not bring it to you, and you ask, "Why have I not had my tea brought to me?" "Oh!" she answers, "it is non-essential; you can do your business very well without that cup of tea." Let such a reply as that be repeated, or let it be given only once, and I will tell you what will be non-essential, it will be non-essential for you to keep that girl any longer in your house; you will want another servant, for you will say, "Clearly she is no servant of mine, she sets herself up as the mistress of the house, for she begins to judge my commands, and to say that this one is essential, and that one is not essential." What do you mean by "non-essential"? "I mean that I can be saved without being baptized." Will you dare to say that wicked sentence over again? "I mean that I can be saved without being baptized." You mean creature! So you will do nothing that Christ commands,

if you can be saved without doing it? You are hardly worth saving at all! A man who always wants to be paid for what he does, whose one idea of religion is that he will do what is essential to his own salvation, only cares to save his own skin, and Christ may go where he likes. Clearly, you are no servant of his; you need to be saved from such a disreputable, miserable state of mind; and may the Lord save you! Oftentimes, I do believe that this little matter of believers' baptism is the test of the sincerity of our profession of love to him. It would have been all the same, it may be, if the Lord Jesus Christ had said, "Pick up six stones off the ground, and carry them in your pocket, and you shall be saved." Somebody would have said, "That stone-picking is a non-essential." It becomes essential as soon as Christ commands it. It is in this way that baptism, if not essential to your salvation, is essential to your obedience to Christ. If you have become his disciple, you are bound henceforth to obey all your Master's commands: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."

III. Now, lastly, CONCERNING BEING SAVED: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

What is this being saved? Well, it means, of course, what everyone wants it to mean, *salvation from the punishment of sin.* "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." His transgressions shall be forgiven him, his iniquity shall be blotted out, he shall not be brought into condemnation; but in the last great day he shall be justified in Christ. Nay, he is justified now, as the apostle saith, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That is certainly a part of this being saved.

It means, next, that he that believeth and is baptized shall have *salvation from the dominion of his old nature.* When thou believest in Christ, there shall suddenly spring up in thee a new life, a new principle; a well shall be digged within thy being, and a fountain of living water shall begin to bubble up within thee unto life everlasting. A miracle shall be wrought upon thee; there shall come into thy heart the Holy Ghost, who shall dwell there to recreate thee, to set up within thy soul a new throne whereon shall reign a new King. The old dominion of sin shall be broken as with a rod of iron; and there shall be a new order of things within thy heart; and righteousness shall begin to reign there by Jesus Christ.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" that is, he shall have *salvation from his old sins.* He shall no longer be the slave of drunkenness; he shall get the love of swearing by the throat; he shall have his lying, his anger, his passion, under his feet. "He that believeth and is baptized" shall see all his old adversaries put to the rout; and what he could not do, through the weakness of his flesh, shall be done for him by the power of the Spirit of God; and by divine grace he shall master his sins. He shall begin to live unto God, under new impulses, strengthened with a new power, and so he shall be delivered from his old sins.

Listen again, for this is wonderful. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" he shall have *salvation from going back to his old sins.* If it were not for the final perseverance of the saints, I should think my gospel a poor gospel to preach; but he who truly

believes in Christ shall have such a change wrought in him that the blessed work shall never be undone. My Lord shall light such a candle in thy heart that the devil himself shall never be able to blow it out. Christ shall come to thee with such power and authority, and set up his eternal throne in thy soul with such divine majesty and might, that thou shalt be his in time and throughout eternity. We preach about no temporary salvation, no work of grace that by-and-by will grow feeble, and lose its power; but we tell of a work of grace that shall enable you who believe to go on from strength to strength, from glory unto glory, till every sin in you shall be driven out, and you shall be made perfectly like your Lord. Then shall you behold his face in righteousness, and be with him for ever and ever.

Once more, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" he shall have *salvation from the age in which he lives*. "But," says one, "I do not want to be saved from that." Do you not? "No." But if you go with the age, and go with the world, you will go down the Niagara which this age is just now shooting, down to the destruction to which this world is doomed. Cherish not the friendship of the world that slew your Lord, for the world and the works that are in it shall be burned up. You remember how Peter said, on the day of Pentecost, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." That is what I want you to do to-night. "With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation." A man who wishes to be a man, and who desires to be a saved man, had need take up arms against this evil age. He who would prove himself to be alive unto God must swim against the current of the times. Dead fish go down stream; can you not see them? I see the white bellies of the dead fish floating down by myriads; but the living fish goes up the stream, against the current, and finds his way to purer waters. Beloved, he who believes in Jesus Christ with all his heart shall be made to play the man where men are now so few, and to stand fast for God and truth where others yield to the Satanic power, and to be holy where ungodliness, like a mighty torrent, now sweeps down our streets. "He that believeth and is baptized" into the adorable name of Jesus swears, as a Red Cross Knight, to follow Christ, and Christ alone, believing in him though every man be a liar, and resolving for him to live, for him to die, and in him to find hope here and eternal felicity hereafter. He is the man who shall be saved from this present evil age to the glory of God the Father.

All this great work is wrought by faith in Christ; that is the one way of salvation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Believe in him, as men sometimes say, "up to the hilt." Believe in his Manhood sympathizing with you; believe in his Godhead able to help you; believe in his blood cleansing you; believe in his eternal life bringing everlasting life to you. God bless you, every one, for his dear Son's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN III. 1—18.

If you were called in to see a person who was dying, and wished to read a chapter from the Word of God, and you were afraid that the sick one did not know the way of salvation, you could not select a better portion than the one we are about to read. I have chosen it in the hope that some may now learn from it what they must do to be saved.

Verses 1, 2. *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night,*

Perhaps he was very busy during the day. It is better to come to Jesus at night than not to come to him at all. All hours are convenient to Christ; you may come to him when you are at home to-night. When everybody else is asleep, Jesus is still awake.

In all probability, however, Nicodemus did not wish to commit himself by coming to Christ by day. He had not yet tried and tested him, so he would not be thought to be Christ's follower till he had first had a quiet private talk with him. As a ruler of the Jews, he was wise in acting thus discreetly.

2. *And said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

He admitted the truth as far as he could see it. The miracles of Christ proved him to be a divinely-commissioned teacher. Always be willing to go as far as you can go in the pursuit of truth. If you cannot see everything at once, see all that you can see. Be not of a cavilling spirit; be frank and teachable as this man was.

3. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

It is such a mystery, a thing of such a marvellous character, that his old nature cannot see it. He must have new eyes, he must be a new man, he must be born again, before he can "see the kingdom of God." Have you caught this idea, my dear hearer? Do you understand that you cannot polish yourself up to a certain point, and then see the kingdom of God? You must be born again; there must be a radical change in you, a new birth, a birth from above, if you are even to see the kingdom of God.

4, 5. *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

At first Jesus said that a man could not see the kingdom of God except he was born again; now he tells Nicodemus that a man cannot enter the kingdom except he is born of water and of the Spirit. There must be a cleansing; he must be "born of water." There must be a spiritual life; he must be "born of the Spirit", or he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh;*

Nothing more. However godly your father, however gracious your mother, all that is "born of the flesh is flesh."

6. *And that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

There must be, then, a Spirit-birth, or else you have no spirit; you belong not to the spiritual realm; and you cannot see and you cannot enter the spiritual kingdom.

7, 8. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof,*

The sounding of the wind blowing through the trees,—

8. *But canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth:*

Where it begins, whither it goes, or where it comes to an end, you cannot tell.

8. *So is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

You do not know where the spirit-life begins; and you cannot tell to what it will lead. There are heights to which the spirit-life can carry you, of which you have never dreamed; this is a mystery beyond your ken.

9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

He did not deny that they might be; but he asked how they could be. Ah, many a man has asked the same question! "How may I be made anew? How may I become a new creature?" Only he that makes all things can make all things new. The new birth is as great a wonder as creation itself; and there is as much, and a great deal more, to be wrought upon you to make you a Christian, as has been wrought upon you to make you a man.

10. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?*

These truths lie on the very doorstep of our holy religion. There are deeper and higher mysteries than these.

11, 12. *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things,*

Common-place things, the lower things of faith. "If I have told you these,"—

12. *And ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*

There are mysteries in our holy religion which we would not tell to everybody. It would be casting pearls before swine to mention them to unregenerate men. Christ tells Nicodemus that the primary truths must be believed before the more advanced doctrines can be revealed.

13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.*

It is Christ who knows everything. He understands all mysteries; he can teach all truth, for he has been in heaven, he came down to earth, and he has gone back again to heaven.

Now, perhaps, some of you will be saying, "How are we to be saved? If there is no salvation without the new birth, how can we obtain the new birth?" Listen. The same chapter which tells you of the mystery of regeneration, tells you of the simple way of salvation by faith in Christ.

14, 15. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

"Whosoever." If you believe in Christ, you are born again. If you trust him, you have the new life. This simple way of salvation is not contradictory to the way of salvation by the new birth, it is the same thing stated in a form that we can comprehend.

16. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

This text has saved thousands of souls. The constellation in the heavens,

called the Great Bear, has in it the two pointers which direct the eye of the observer to the pole star ; and this verse points to Christ so clearly, so distinctly, that many have found him by it, and have lived. Let me read it again: " For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

17,.18. *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world ; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned : but he that believeth not is condemned already,*

Not, " shall be condemned at the last," though that also is true ; but " he that believeth not is condemned already,"—

18. *Because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*

May the Lord bless to us the reading of this very simple gospel chapter, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake ! Amen.

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A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 24TH, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On the Evening of Christmas-day, 1831.

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" —Psalm cxix. 103.

THIS is a time of feasting; and we may as well have our feast as other people have theirs. Let us see whether there is not something for our spiritual palate, something to satisfy our spiritual appetite, that we may eat, and be content, and rejoice before the Lord. Do you not think that two of the words in our text are very strange? If you had written them, would you not have said, "How sweet are thy words unto my *ear*"? The psalmist says, "How sweet are thy words unto my *palate!*" for that is the word in the margin. He did not write, "Yea, sweeter than honey to my *hearing!*" but, "sweeter than honey to my *mouth!*" Are words, then, things that we can taste and eat? No, not if they are the words of man; it would take many of our words to fill a hungry belly. "Be ye warmed and filled:" it would take many tons of that sort of fodder to feed "a brother or sister destitute of daily food", for man's words are air and airy, light and frothy. They often deceive, they mock, they awaken hopes which are never realized; but God's words are full of substance, they are spirit, they are life, they are to be fed upon by the spiritually hungry.

Marvel not that I say this unto you. It was God's word that made us; is it any wonder that his word should sustain us? If his word gives life, do you wonder that his word should also give food for that life? Marvel not, for it is written: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God's words are meat, and drink, and food; and if bodies live not upon words, souls and spirits feed upon the words of God, and so are satisfied, and full of delight. This is the language of an eater as well as of a hearer, of one who heard the words, and then ate the words. The expression is oriental, but we are not quite strangers to it, even in our western talk, for we say, "They seem to eat the man's words;"

that is, when the hearers are very attentive to them, when they enjoy them, when the preacher's words seem to comfort them, and to minister sustenance to their mind and to their spirit.

I like this way of describing the reception of God's word as a matter of eating, for a man cannot eat God's word without living. He that takes it into himself must live thereby. There is a reality about the faith which eats; there is a something there most sure, which contains the elements of salvation, for tasting is a spiritual sense which implies nearness. You can hear at a great distance by means of the telephone; but, somehow, I do not think that anyone will invent an electrical taster. Nobody knows what may be done; but I fancy that I shall never be able to eat anything in New York. I think that we shall hardly ever reach such a triumph of science as that. There will always have to be a measure of nearness if we are to taste anything, and so it is with God's word. If we hear it, it is music in the ear; but still it may seem to be at a distance from us. We may not get a grip and grasp of it; but if we taste it, that means that we really have it here within ourselves. Then has it come very near to us, and we enter into fellowship with the God who gave it.

This idea of tasting God's word contains the thought of receptiveness. A man may hear a thing and, as we say, it goes in at one ear and out at the other, and so it does often; but that which a man gets into his mouth till he tastes it, and it is sweet to his palate, well, he has received that. If it be sweet to him, he will not do as they who have something lukewarm, which is objectionable, which they cast away out of their mouth; but when he finds it palatable, the sweetness will make him keep it where it is till he swallows it down into his inward parts. So I love this thought of tasting God's word, because it implies nearness, and it implies an actual reception, and a veritable holding-fast of that which is so appreciated by the taste.

Tasting is also a personal matter. "Friends, Romans, countrymen," said Mark Antony, in his oration over the body of Cæsar, "lend me your ears;" and they go to be lent, and numbers of people hear for others. But tasting, surely, is a personal business; there is no possibility of my eating for you. If you choose to starve yourself by a long fast of fifty days, so you must. If I were to sit down, and industriously attempt to eat your portion of food, and my own, too, it would not avail you in the least; you must eat for yourselves, and there is no knowing the value of God's word till you eat it for yourself. You must personally believe it, personally trust to it, personally receive it into your innermost spirit, or else you cannot know anything about its power to bless and to sustain. I do pray, dear friends, that we may every one of us, to-night, understand what the psalmist meant when he spoke of tasting God's words, and of finding them sweeter than honey to his mouth.

I. First, to-night, I call your attention to AN EXCLAMATION. The text contains two notes of exclamation or admiration: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" I cannot throw the notes of admiration and exclamation into my speech, as I would like to do; but this verse is evidently the utterance of one who is somewhat surprised and amazed, one who has a thought which

he cannot adequately express. The thought is also one that gives much delight to the writer, for he exclaims, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

Now, I believe that it is a matter of wonder to many to find *the gospel so sweet when the soul first tastes it.* Until I believed in Christ, I could not have imagined that a man was capable of so much delight as I then experienced. When I first looked to Christ, and was lightened, the ease I felt when my burden rolled from off my shoulder quite astonished me. It seemed to me as if a man could never know such rest as I then enjoyed. When I beheld my sin all put away through Christ's atoning blood, and knew myself to be "accepted in the Beloved," I could have said, with the queen of Sheba, "Behold, the half was not told me." I had heard my father and other Christian men say that blessed are the people who trust in the Lord, but I never thought there really was such blessedness as I found. I fancied that they would decoy me with some sweet declarations of what, after all, might be very commonplace, but I did not find it to be so; and I am here to bear my witness that, when I believed God's promise, I was so amazed and overpowered with joy that, even now, I cannot tell you the delight I felt, ay, and still do feel, in the word of a faithful God to all who trust in Jesus Christ, his Son.

This, then, may be the exclamation of a soul tasting the gospel for the first time; but it may also be the exclamation of *a soul cheered by still tasting the gospel:* "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" "I have known the Lord," says one, "these forty years." Another says, "I have known Christ these thirty years; but he is as precious to me as ever he was, his word is as fresh and novel as if I had never heard it before, and his promise comes to my soul with as much of life and power as if he had only spoken it yesterday, and I had never heard it till this moment." Are you not surprised, sometimes, you who are getting into middle life, or even verging on old age, to find how sweet God's word still is to you? And if, perhaps, you have been away from the house of God travelling in foreign lands, or you have been laid aside by sickness, or, if, perchance, you are a preacher, and do not often hear a sermon, is it not a very delightful thing to sit in your pew, and when you are hearing the gospel, to say, "Oh, it is sweet! It is coming home to me now"? I heard a sermon, some years ago,—I do not often get the opportunity of hearing,—and, when my tears began to flow under a simple statement of the gospel, I said to myself, "Yes, I am not a mere dealer in it, who hands it out to others, for I relish the flavour of it myself." Why, I have had to stand here, sometimes, like the butchers at Christmas time, cutting and chopping off joints of meat for you all, and I have not had even a snack myself all the while; but when I get the opportunity of sitting down at the table, and listening, it may be, to a poor, humble preacher talking about Christ, I seem to set my knife and fork to work, and I say, "Yes, that is just the very food for me, give me some more of it. My soul can feed upon such fare as that;" and I have felt glad, with an inward and unspeakable delight, to find how sweet it was to my taste; "yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Rejoice, dear friends, if you find it so.

I reckon that this language of exclamation and admiration will also come from *the most advanced saint, increasing in knowledge of the gospel*, the believer who has studied the word of God most earnestly, and who has had the deepest experience in it. Other books are soon done with, but the Bible is never fully understood. I think that most readers will tell you that, the more they read, the fewer books become; whereas, to the young, there is a whole library yet to go through. The man who has been a diligent and careful reader all his life finds only some few books that he now cares to read. He knows the rest, he could write the most of them; perhaps, could write them better than they are written. Now he keeps on striking out this one from the list, and that other, for he has gone beyond them; and the book which charmed him when he was young ceases to have any value to him when he gets beyond it in his riper years. He has seen through its mistakes, and now he yearns for something more accurate; but it is never so with the words of God. It is never so with *the* Word of God, the Incarnate Word, the Christ. The more you know of him, the more you wish to know; and the more you taste of him, the sweeter he becomes till, in heaven, the sweetness will be far more intense than it is now, and Christ will be more precious and more delightful to us through the eternal ages than he is at this present moment. I believe that, in glory, the saints will often lift up their hands, and say, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" When those words shall have been completely fulfilled, the very retrospect of the promise will charm our immortal spirits, till heaven shall become as a wood, like that of Jonathan, which dripped with honey; and every word that God spoke to us, when we were here below, shall come back to us with matchless sweetness as we remember it in the world to come.

II. But now, secondly, take the text not only with its two notes of admiration, but as A STATEMENT, a cool statement of matters of fact. David is one who, when his heart boils with holy fervour, and his hand wields the pen of a ready writer, still writes accurately. He never speaks more than the truth even when he is most emphatic, so that I am sure that David means to tell us here that God's words were sweet to him.

First, *they were unutterably sweet:* "How sweet!" but he does not tell us how sweet they were. He says, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" as if he could not tell us what delightfulness he found in the teachings of God's word; it was unutterable. We can tell you, dear hearers, that God's words of promise are very, very sweet; but we can convey to you no sort of idea of how great that sweetness is. Oh, taste for yourselves, and see that the Lord is good! There is no describing the flavours of a royal banquet, there is no picturing to a man who has not the sense of smell the fragrance of a delicious perfume; and you must personally know the sweetness of the word of God, for to us it is positively unutterable.

This much, however, the psalmist does utter. He tells us that God's words are *surpassingly sweet*, for, says he, "They are sweeter than honey." Honey is supposed to be the sweetest of all known substances. So David means that, if there is anything that can

delight the heart of man, God's word could charm his heart better than that. David means that, if there is anything that could cheer a man, God's word could comfort him better than any other consolation. If there be joy, if there be peace, if there be rest, if there be bliss, to be found in anything else, all that, and more than that, can be found in a higher degree in the teachings of God's word, and in the blessings of the covenant of grace. Sweeter than sweetness itself, sweeter than the sweetest thing that God himself has made, is God's word which he has spoken. Oh, that we did but know how to taste it!

The psalmist also makes this statement, that *all God's words are thus unutterably sweet to him.* He does not say that they are so to all men; but he says, "How sweet are thy words unto *my* taste! yea, sweeter than honey to *my* mouth!" He speaks thus of all God's words. We know some people who love God's promises, but they do not care much about his precepts. If God speaks a word of grace, they like that; but if it is a word of command, they do not care about that. Oh, brothers and sisters, I hope we have a taste for every word that God has spoken! A man ought not to say, "I do not like a sermon from the Old Testament so much as I do a sermon from the New Testament." There must be no picking and choosing with God's word. It is virtually atheism when men begin to set one word of God over against another, for the man who dares to criticize God's revelation makes himself greater than God, and therein he has undeified the Deity, and there is no God to him. My God is such to me that, if I know a word to be inspired by his Spirit, I value it beyond all conception. It is not for me to say, "This word of my Master is nothing compared with another word." All these words came from the same mouth; and, coming from the same mouth, they are all equally true to me; and, if not all alike rich in comfort, yet "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." From one end of it to the other, it answers some divine purpose; and who am I that I should sit in judgment upon it? I pray you, brethren and sisters, value every word of God, and let no man lead you into the error of setting this one above the other; for, if they be God's words, they are all precious, and you ought to count them so.

David seems to say that *God's words were precious to him at all times.* They were sweet to him when he wrote the text; and I cannot tell in what condition of body and mind he was at that time; but this I do know, lying upon the bed of sickness, racked with pain, many of God's saints have said, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" And this also I do know, that, lifted up with gratitude for the blessings of providence,—health, wealth, friends,—yet God's saints have found greater sweetness in his word than in all temporal things; and they have still said, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" This is an abiding mark of a child of God, that God's words are sweet to him, ay, sometimes very sweet even when he is half afraid to partake of them! "Oh," says he "would God they were mine! I want nothing sweeter than God's word; and, even if I am a little fearful of appropriating it to myself, yet still it is very, very dear to me." If the name of Jesus is sweeter than honey to your taste, then be glad.

for this is a mark of a child of God that never failed yet, and never will fail while the world stands.

III. Now, thirdly, look at the text again, and you will see that it contains A REPETITION: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" Well, that is all right, David; we understand you. "Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Why do you want to say that? Is not that saying the same thing twice over? Yes, and intentionally so, because God's word is sweet to his people in many ways, and many times over.

As I have already said to you, it is very sweet in its *reception*. When we first take it into our heart, and feed upon it, it is very precious; but, spiritually, men are something like ruminating animals, they have the power of feeding again, and again, and again, on that which they have once received. See how the cattle lie down, and chew the cud; and it is when they chew the cud, I suppose, that they get the sweetness out of that which they have eaten. And so, spiritually, when men have once received Christ, they get increasing sweetness out of him by *meditation*. Having taken him into their souls, they afterwards inwardly digest the precious word, and get the secret juice and latent sweetnesses out of the promises of God's most holy revelation and out of Jesus Christ himself. It is thus that the psalmist first says, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" And then he rolls them round again in his mouth by meditation, and so he repeats himself as he says, "Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"

But do you not think that the repetition in the text means something else, namely, that while, first of all, Christ's word is very sweet to our taste, there is another sweetness when we get it into our mouth, not so much for our own eating, as speaking of it to others? There is great sweetness about the *declaration* of God's words. Some of you who love the Lord have never yet told anybody. You are secret Christians, you hide away behind pillar and post. Oh, but God's word is very sweet to you, you say, as you eat your morsel of bread in the corner! So it is, but you would have another and a greater sweetness if you would come out and avow that you love the Lord. I am sure you would. In fact, there is many a child of God who never does enjoy the full sweetness of religion, because he has not had the courage to confess Christ before men. I wish that some of you halting ones, you who are much-afraid and fearing, would obey the whole of the gospel. You know the gospel is, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Now, obey the whole of the gospel; then you shall get the whole of its sweetness. But, mayhap, there is some peculiar flavour in the word which you have never known as yet, because you have been disobedient children. Did you ever notice that saying of our Lord, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? Yes, you know all about that, you say. Christ says to you, "Come, unto me, and I will give you rest." Now go a little farther; what is the next verse? "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; and ye shall find rest." Why, that is

another rest! I thought you had rest; did not Jesus say that he would give you rest? Yet in the next verse he says, "Ye shall find rest." Yes, that is another rest, a still deeper one, which you find when you willingly take Christ's yoke upon you, and become his disciples, learning of him. So I do believe my text means just that. God's word is very sweet to the taste when you receive it by faith; but it has another and a special and deeper sweetness when you bring it into your mouth, and confess Christ before men.

And let me add to this that there is a very special sweetness about preaching Christ, in the public *proclamation* of his word. It may be that some brother here has the gift of speech, but has never used it for his Master. Let me put in my witness here. God's word has been unutterably sweet to my own heart, as I have believed it; it has been remarkably precious to me as I have confessed it as a Christian man; but still there is a something, I cannot tell you what, of singular delight about the preaching of this word. Oh, sometimes, when I have prepared my sermon, it has been bitter in my belly, but it has been as honey in my mouth when I have preached it to the great congregation gathered here! If I might choose my destiny, and if I had even to stop out of heaven for the purpose, it would be heaven to me to be permitted always to be preaching Christ and the glories of his salvation; and I do not know that I should have any choice between that and heaven. If I might be privileged to be, without ceasing, lauding and praising and extolling that dear Word of God, the Christ who was born at Bethlehem, if I might tell out to sinners everywhere that God is in him making reconciliation, nay, that he has made reconciliation for all who believe in him, this might be heaven enough, at least for one poor heart, world without end.

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Try, brother, whether it will not sweeten your mouth if you begin to preach Christ. Perhaps you have been too quiet and too silent. Get up and speak for Jesus, and see whether the honey does not come into your mouth at once. In the olden time, they pictured the orator with bees buzzing round his lips, storing up the honey that dropped from his sweet utterances. This may be but a fable concerning the human talker; but certainly it is true of the man who preaches Christ, that his lips drop honey, and the more he speaks of his dear Lord and Master, and the less he tries with human eloquence to magnify himself, the more of sacred sweetness shall there be in every word that he utters.

So I think I have accounted for the repetition, have I not? It is no repetition after all; at least, it is no tautology, it is only a right and necessary repetition.

IV. And now I am going to wind up, in the fourth place, with AN EXAMINATION, the examination of everybody here present to-night. It is the close of the year, and one may not object to a few personal enquiries at such a time.

The first and chief enquiry is this,—Are God's words sweet to me? Is Christ himself, the Master-Word of God, the *Logos*, is he sweet to me? For, if not, what is the reason?

First, may it be that I have no taste? *Have I spiritual taste?* It

would be a sad thing to be wholly without natural taste; I do know one such person, who has no taste at all. The poet Wordsworth was for years without the power of smell. His was a very remarkable case, with a mind so dainty, so delicate, so beautiful. Once upon a time, for a very short season, the power of smell came to him among the heather, and you know how every primrose by the river's brim had words for Wordsworth, and did talk with him; and when the sweet perfume came from the dear May flowers, the poet was quite enraptured, as if he had for a little while entered into heaven. But the power of smell soon went away, and he was again unhappily bereft of it. The richest flower, the sweetest shrub, could be nothing to the man whose nostril was not sensitive to its perfume. And what if that should be so with me spiritually? Perhaps, my dear hearer, you have heard all we have been saying about Christ, and you have heard many rich and rare hymns about him; but you never did feel that there was any sweetness in him. Then I beg you to enquire whether you may not be lacking in a sense which others have. If a person were to say to me, "How lovely is that Italian sky! What a deep blue it has!" and if I turned my face that way, and said, "I see nothing at all;" if, when he pointed to the sea, or to the green fields, I looked in that direction, and saw nothing, what should I infer? Why, that he possessed a power called sight, which I did not possess! Of course, I might be foolish enough to say, "There is no blue sky; there is no such thing. There are no green fields; there is no ocean; there is no sun; I am sure there is not, for I never saw them." One day, I saw a man sitting at a table, with his napkin under his chin, enjoying his dinner; and he overheard an observation that I made about a sinner, and he said, "I never had a spiritual sensation in my life, and I do not believe that there is anything spiritual in this world." Now, if I had been standing near a sty, and a pig had made that observation, I should not have contradicted him; and I did not contradict this man, for I thought that he spoke the truth, I quite believed that he had never experienced a spiritual sensation in his life? And when some men say, "I perceive no sweetness in Christ, and, therefore, there is none," I wish that they would draw another inference, "Therefore I have not that taste which would enable me to perceive his sweetness;" for that is just the truth. A man who has never been born again is dead as to all spiritual things, and he cannot hear, or see, or taste, anything that is spiritual. He is not alive unto God as yet. I put this solemn enquiry to every one who says, "I see no beauty in Christ," may it not be that you have no eyes? If you say, "I hear no music in his voice; in fact, I do not hear that voice," may it not be that your ears are sealed? And if you say, "I taste no sweetness in the word of God, or the Christ of God," may it not be that you are still dead in trespasses and sins? If so, may God quicken you, of his infinite mercy!

Still, there is another answer to the question which I beg to put by way of examination. If the word of God be not very sweet to me, *have I an appetite?* Solomon says, "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet." Ah, when a soul is full of itself, and of the world, and of the pleasures of sin,

I do not wonder that it sees no sweetness in Christ, for it has no appetite! Oh, but when a soul is emptied, when a soul hungers and thirsts after God, when it is conscious of its wants and miseries, as I hope some here present are, then is Christ sweet indeed! O hungry ones, take him into your souls, suck down his precious word! Christ has come on purpose to feed hungry spirits. If you want him, you may have him; and the more you want him, the more free he is to you, and the more freely may you partake of him. He is just such a Christ as you want. May God make you ravenous after him, so ravenous that you may never rest till you have received him as altogether your own!

Yet still there is another answer. If I do not taste sweetness in Christ, *am I in health?* When a man is ill, his soul "abhorreth all manner of meat." Nothing tastes nice to a man whose palate is out of order through sickness. Now, does it happen, to-night, that some of you do not feel any joy in Christ? Then you are ill, brother. Put your tongue out, let us look at it. Ah, it has got furred up with the world, I am sure! Something ails you if Christ is not sweet. Sometimes, you have sat in these pews, some of you, and you have heard Christ preached till you hardly knew how to keep your seats. You have been ready to stand up, and clap your hands to the praise of his dear name; and now you do not feel anything at all. You can almost go to sleep, if you do not actually slumber. The preacher is quite willing to share the blame with you, for he is not all he ought to be; but he does not mean to take all the blame of it, for, as far as he knows how, he preaches the same Saviour now as ever, and tries to preach him with as much earnestness as ever. May it not be possible, brother or sister, that you are not quite right spiritually, that you are getting ill, that your heart is growing feeble? Go home, and pray the Lord to set you right. Oh, that he would cleanse you, and purify you, and make you yet to be strong and vigorous; and then this would be one of the first tokens of it, that Christ would once more become inexpressibly sweet to you!

I must also get you to ask yourself this question,—*Have I savoured the world or sin?* People sometimes lose their appetite for sweetness by eating something sour. You may have had one flavour in your mouth, but when you have eaten something with a different flavour, you cannot taste the first. If a man gets fond of the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt,—strong things those,—if he once gets the savour of them into his mouth, he is not likely to have any very dainty tooth for the precious things of God. Spiritual flavours have need of great spirituality to enjoy them, I know not what other word to use. They need that the palate be kept clean; for otherwise, if the world is sweet to us, if sin has any hold upon us, to that extent and degree shall we be incapable of appreciating the sweet things of God.

This is my last question,—*Have I habituated myself to this food?* All earthly sweetness cloys; he who eats honey for a long while will care no more for honey. But it is very different with the Christ of God. The sweetness of Christ is not fully known except to those who have known him long, who by reason of constant use have had their senses

fully exercised. There is none so greedy after Christ as the man who has had most of him. Paul had been a believer at least fifteen years, and yet he said this was his ambition, "That I may know him." Had he not known Christ before? Yes; but the more he knew him, the more he longed to know him. Come, brother, if you do not taste the sweetness of Christ to-night in the preaching of the word, surely it must be because you have not of late been feeding upon him. Make haste, and come along; and let your soul be filled with him, even from this glad hour.

I have done when I have reminded those here present who see no sweetness in the words of God, that there is a time coming when they will be compelled to hear the word of God in a very different way from that in which they hear it to-night. One of the first works of the resurrection will be the creation of the ear. I do not know by what process we shall be raised from the dead, except that the Lord Jesus said this, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." When the voice of the Son of God shall strike upon that ear of yours, what a sensation it will cause! God has spoken to you now by the voice of one like yourself, and he has spoken according to the printed page; and you have chosen not to hear it; but when, in that last day, he shall speak by the angel's trumpet, and by the voice of his Son, you will be obliged to hear; and. rising from your grave, bursting your cerements, you must obey, and you must stand, willing or unwilling, before that last dread tribunal, to answer for every deed done in the body, for every idle word that you have spoken, ay, and for every thought that you have imagined against the Most High God! It may be a thousand years before that will happen, it may be ten thousand years, I cannot tell; but it will happen in God's time, and that space between will be but as the twinkling of an eye, and there will you be before the face of the great Judge, and you will not be able to say with David, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste!" but, you will cry out, in the agony of your spirit, "Oh, the gall and wormwood!" Oh, the fire that shall burn into your very soul, when God shall say, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." God grant that you may not be bidden so to depart; and, that you may not, I pray you now to listen to the voice of God, which bids you trust Jesus and live! I can only speak with these poor feeble lips, and there is no power in anything that I can say; but God the Holy Ghost can speak with irresistible might to your hearts, and constrain you to taste of Christ to-night by hearing the word of God in your very soul. I pray that he may do it, for his dear name's sake! Amen and Amen

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

PSALM CXIX. 89—112.

Verse 89. *For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.*

Other things come, and go, and change, moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, everything earthly is changeable; but "Thy word is settled, —settled in heaven," with the eternal settlements. No truth of it can fail, no promise of it can be broken. What a joy this is to our hearts to-night! There is something sure, after all: "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven."

90. *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.*

That is, God has spoken to nature, and that word has established the earth, and made it to stand securely.

91. *They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.*

It was God's word that made the sun, and the moon, and the stars; and it is God's word that bids creation still exist. And that is the almighty word upon which you and I are resting, if we are truly trusting in the living God.

"His very word of grace is strong
As that which built the skies;
The voice that rolls the stars along
Speaks all the promises."

92. *Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.*

Let us remember how God's word has kept some of us alive when we had nothing else to live upon. Hope would have quite failed, and we should have been driven to despair, if it had not been for the precious, priceless word of God.

93. *I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.*

Nothing sharpens the memory like having been quickened. If we have been at death's door, and the word of God has brought us renewed life, we shall never forget it.

94—96. *I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection:*

No matter who it is that boasts of being perfect, "I have seen an end of all perfection."

96. *But thy commandment—*

There lies the perfection—

96. *Is exceeding broad.*

Covering the whole life, covering the thoughts, the intents, the desires of the inner and secret nature.

97, 98. *O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.*

If we have God's law always with us, we shall be wiser than the most crafty of our enemies; for, after all, there is nothing that puzzles and baffles cunning men like simple honesty. Do that which is right, and you will cut through the nets in which men would entangle you. They cannot trip you up if your feet are settled in God's ways.

99, 100. *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.*

There is more wisdom in obeying God than in all the ethics of heathen philosophers. It matters not whence they take their precepts and maxims, there is no wisdom like yielding one's heart to God.

101—104. *I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.*

The man who cannot hate does not love; but he who loves that which is right, is by no means indifferent to the wrong and to the false; he hates it, and the more intensely he loves God, and loves right, the more intensely does he hate every false way. Especially does he hate it in himself. Oh, to be delivered altogether from every trace of falsehood!

105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

It shows me the way; it cheers me in the way; it reveals to me the difficulties of the way.

106, 107. *I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O* LORD, *according unto thy word.*

Are any of you afflicted to-night? I commend this prayer to your use. One would have expected that David would have prayed, "I am afflicted very much: comfort me, O Lord." Or, "Relieve me, O Lord." Instead of praying so, he cries, "Quicken me, O Lord," and he did well. Let us imitate him, for if we get more spiritual light and life, we shall, by that means, get more comfort, and the trouble from which we are suffering will soon cease to vex our spirit.

108—112. *Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O* LORD, *and teach me thy judgments. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.*

Oh, that every one of us might be able to make this declaration of the psalmist our own! God grant it, for Christ's sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—1038, 119 (Song I.), 786.

SPECIAL NOTICE TO ALL READERS OF MR. SPURGEON'S SERMONS.—Messrs. Passmore and Alabaster have decided to present, with the January number of *The Sword and the Trowel*, a fine-art portrait of the late beloved PASTOR C. H. SPURGEON, similar in size to the one given with the Magazine at the beginning of this year. The likeness then issued was the *last* that was taken before Mr. Spurgeon's long illness; the one now being prepared was the *first* popular portrait of the young preacher at New Park Street, Exeter Hall, and the Surrey Gardens Music Hall. The many thousands, who love as ardently as ever the faithful servant of the Lord Jesus whose sermons they either heard or still continue to read, will thus be enabled to look upon the face that was familiar to many of them during a large part of his lifetime; and thousands will gratefully point to the well-remembered features, and say, "That was the man of God who led me to the Saviour."

The Magazine and portrait will be sent, as last year, post free for 5d. to any address; or they can be obtained through all booksellers at 3d. As a large sale is anticipated, friends had better intimate early how many copies they are likely to require.

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

THE UNDYING GOSPEL FOR THE DYING YEAR.

A Sermon

INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, DECEMBER 31ST, 1893,

DELIVERED BY

C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON,

On Lord's-day Evening, October 20th, 1889.

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." —Romans v. 6.

BELOVED friends, whatever the condition of a child of God is, he is not without hope. A believer in the Lord Jesus Christ may be very sorely tried, his afflictions may be multiplied, and they may be very keen; but, even in that condition, he has hope. It is not possible for him to be forsaken of God; his God must help him. If the worst comes to the worst, and he is altogether forsaken of men, and sees no way of escape out of his tremendous difficulties, still his God must help him. He has no right whatever to be afraid.

The argument of our text is this: since the Lord Jesus Christ saved us when we were ungodly, and came to our rescue when we were without strength, we can never be in a worse condition than that; and if he then did the best thing possible for us, namely, died for us, there is nothing which he will not do. In fact, he will give us all things, and he will do all things for us, so as to keep us safely, and bear us through. The argument is that, looking back, we see the great love of God to us in the gift of his dear Son for us when there was nothing good in us, and when we were ungodly, when we had no power to produce anything good, for we were without strength. At such a time, even at such a time, Christ came on wings of love, and up to the bloody tree he went, and laid down his life for our deliverance. We, therefore, feel confident that he will not leave us now, and that he will not keep back anything from us whatever we may need. He has committed himself to the work of our eternal salvation, and he will not be balked of it. He has done too much for us already ever to run back from his purpose; and in our worst estate, if we are in that condition to-night, we may still confidently appeal to him, and rest quite sure that he will bring us up even to the heights of joy and safety. That is the drift of the text and of the sermon to-night.

There are three grand points of consolation suggested by the text. The first lies in this one line, "*Christ died for the ungodly.*" The second lies in this sentence, "*Christ died for us* "*when we were yet without strength*"*;* and there is a rich vein of comfort in the third statement, that *Christ died for us* "*in due time.*" "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." Time is often a very important element when one is in trouble. In the nick of time, Christ came for our deliverance, and so he will again.

I. The first point of consolation in our text is this. If any child of God here is in sore dismay, and bowed down by reason of trouble, fancying that God will leave him, let him first meditate on this word, "CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY."

I should like to have this sentence put up at the corner of every street, "Christ died for the ungodly." I am afraid that it would cause a great many observations to be made. Some would kick at it very heavily; but there are others who would leap at sight of it very joyfully. "Christ died for the ungodly." Does it mean what it says? The common notion, not expressed in so many words, but harboured in many minds, is that Christ died for the godly, that Christ died for good people; but the text says, "Christ died for the ungodly." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." I say again that the current notion, unexpressed but still believed, is that Christ came into the world to save saints. This is not true. He came into the world to save sinners; or, to come back to the very words of the text, "Christ died for the ungodly." I remember reading of a young woman, who had long been in great distress of conscience, and she found comfort from an utterance of Mr. Moody Stuart in prayer, when he quoted these words of my text, "Christ died for the ungodly." She had never caught at that idea before; she had always been trying to see something good in herself, and she thought that, if she could spy out some good thing in herself, then she would know that Christ died for her; but it was like a new revelation when she really understood that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, and that he "died for the ungodly."

Now this must be true, for Scripture puts it so plainly, "Christ died for the ungodly." It must be true for, in the first place, *there was nobody else to die for but the ungodly.* In this same Epistle, Paul says that all mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, as it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." So he sums us all up with his sweeping condemnation, "None righteous, no, not one." So that, if Christ had died for anybody, he must have died for the ungodly, since the whole human race has degenerated into that condition; and that is the state by nature of every man that is born of woman. Some are openly ungodly. Many are religiously ungodly, a very dangerous because very deceitful condition, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. This first point is clear, then, Christ must have died for the ungodly, since there was nobody else for whom to die.

And, next, *only the ungodly needed that he should die for them.* If you are godly, if you are good, if you have perfectly kept the law of God, what have you to do with Christ? You are saved already; in fact, you are not lost, and so you do not want any saving. If you have kept all the commandments from your youth up, you may well say, "What lack I yet?" If you are so good that you could hardly be better, and have a most respectable robe of righteousness of your own in which to appear before God, I ask again, What have you to do with Christ? Why should he die for a man who has not any sins that need washing away? O ye self-righteous, look to the sparks of your own fire, for Christ will kindle no fire for you! O ye who believe your own characters to be all that they should be, and who rest your hope on that fallacy, I say again, why should Christ come to be a Physician to those who are not sick? Why should he come to give alms to those who are not poor? Why should he lay down his life to bear the sins of those who have no sins? "Christ died for the ungodly" because nobody but the ungodly needed that he should die for them.

There is one point that we must mark, *Christ did die for the ungodly.* His form of death was just that which the ungodly deserved; he died by sentence of the law, he died nailed to a gibbet, he died the death of a felon, with a thief on either side of him. He died in the dark, crying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He died, not as one who had himself sinned, but he died as sinners have to die, for he took upon himself the sins of the ungodly; and being found standing in their place, he felt the scourge of God that should have fallen upon the ungodly. Scourge, did I say? He felt the sword of God, that would have slain the ungodly, as it is written, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." Christ really died for the ungodly. They tell us that he died to confirm his testimony, in which respect his death is no better than the death of any martyr who dies to confirm his testimony; but the text says, "Christ died for the ungodly." They say that he died as the completion of his life, which many a good man has done, and therein the cross has no pre-eminence; but the text says, "Christ died for the ungodly," and we shall stand to it that this is true. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." They turn round and say, "That is your theory of the atonement." I beg your pardon; it is the atonement. It is not a theory at all; and there is no other atonement but the substitution of Christ in the room, and place, and stead of the ungodly He died the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. This is the true and only doctrine of atonement; and he that receiveth it shall find comfort by it, but he that rejecteth it doth so at peril of his own soul. "Christ died for the ungodly." I cannot speak plainer words than Paul, inspired by the Holy Ghost, has written; there let them stand, "Christ died for the ungodly."

Now then, I want you, who are the people of God, to pick up the argument out of this truth. If Christ did this crowning act of dying for the ungodly, do you think that he will ever cast away the man who has peace with God? Read the first verse again, "Therefore being

justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Now, if he died for you when you had no peace with God, when, in fact, you had no God at all, when you were ungodly, that is, not under the influence of God, when you were enemies to God by wicked works, if Christ died for you then, will he not save you now? If you feel within your heart to-night a sweet reconciliation to God your heavenly Father, then, whatever your trouble be, do not believe that God can leave you. Whatever the deep depression of your spirit, do not imagine that he can forsake you. He that died for you as ungodly will certainly save you now that you have peace with God through him.

More than that, when you have read those words in the first verse, "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," go on to the second verse, "By whom also we have access by faith." Why, you are one of those who can go to God when you will, and speak with him as a man speaketh with his friend! By faith, you are permitted to come to God in prayer, and in praise, and to walk with God in the light as he is in the light. Come, beloved, if Christ died for you when you were dead, when you were ungodly, will he, can he, leave you now that he has given you access to the Father by himself? You come in and out of his house like a home-born son; and if he loved you so as to die for you when you were a stranger to God, do you think that he will leave you now that you have access to God through him?

Go on a little farther, and you find it written, "and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." A little while ago, you know, you had no hope of glory; you had no expectation of ever getting to heaven. Poor soul that you were, your glory was your shame; your glory was worldly pleasure and worldly gain; but now you "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." God has given you that good hope through grace. Sometimes, when it is fine weather with you, you climb to the top of Mount Clear, and looking toward the Celestial City, you can almost see the light of it. Sometimes, when the wind lies the right way, you have heard some stray notes from the harps of angels, and you have wished yourself among them. Some of you know that the hope of glory has often burned within your heart; well, then, beloved, if the Lord has given you that hope, can he disappoint it? If Christ died for you when you had no hope, when you did not want a hope, when you were ungodly, think of the weight of this argument to you who rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is mightier than a thousand Nasmyth hammers, for it smashes every doubt to shivers. He that died for the ungodly will certainly save those who have a good hope of heaven.

Once more. You are, at this time, so far from being ungodly that the love of God is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto you. You know that it is so; you feel that God loves you. If you do not feel it to-night, you have felt it. You have realized the love of God in your heart, as though a bottle of otto of roses had been broken, and the perfume had filled all your spirit. You have said to yourself, "Jesus loves me." You have been overjoyed with that thought, and you have also said, "I know that I love him." You have felt the goings forth of your spirit like the meltings

of the ice in the springtime. Every little brooklet, that had been frozen up within your nature, has leapt in gracious liberty beneath the sunlight of divine love. Well now, do you think that the Lord has ever taught you to love him, and has shown you that he loves you, and yet will forsake you? You say, "O sir, you do not know what my trial is!" No, I do not; but your heavenly Father does, and if he loved you when you were ungodly, will he cast you away now that he has shed his love abroad in your heart? "Oh, but I have lost the very staff of bread! I do not know how I am to get a living." No, but you have the living God to depend upon; and, after giving his Son to save you, he will surely give you bread; he will not let you famish. "Ah, but, my dear sir, the beloved of my heart is laid low! There is in the cemetery the dearest object of my affection." Is it really so? I thought that he left the dead some time ago; I thought that the dearest object of your affection had gone up to the right hand of the Father. Is it not so? "Ah, that is not what I mean, sir! I mean that I have lost one whom I fondly loved." I know that you have; but do you think that the Lord has turned against you because he has permitted this trial to come upon you? How can he ever desert those for whom he died? And if he died for them when they were ungodly, will he not live for them now that he has shed his love abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost? I cannot work this out for you; I want you to go home, and work it out for yourselves. If any of you are cast down, here is the first well of comfort whereat you may drink full draughts of divine consolation: "Christ died for the ungodly." Then he must help those who are trusting in him.

II. Now we come to a second well, to see whether we can draw waters of comfort out of that also. According to our text, CHRIST DIED FOR US "WHEN WE WERE YET WITHOUT STRENGTH."

I must only say a word or two here because the time will not allow me to enlarge. First, *we were naturally in a lost condition through the fall*, when we were born into this world, and we lived in it for years "without strength" to do that which was right. When we began to wake up a little to thoughts of God, and things divine, we heard the truth preached; but we were still without power of access even to the gospel. We were bidden to repent; but our hard heart would yield no waters of repentance. We were bidden to believe in Christ; the preacher might as well have commanded the dead to rise out of their graves. Christ was set before us in all his beauty; yet such was our blindness that we could not appreciate his loveliness. The bread of life was put on the table before us; but such was our obstinacy that we would not believe it to be bread, and we would not eat of it. We were "without strength."

And further on, when the will came, and the Lord began by his grace to work upon us, we had a will to repent, we had a will to believe, and we had a will to come to Christ; yet *we were without the graces which are now our strength.* I remember well the time when I had to say, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not." "I would, but cannot repent; I would, but cannot believe." A rock was in the heart; a stone was laid over the mouth of the well of consolation. We were "without strength." But when

we were in that sad state, without one of the graces which are now our strength, without one of those holy fruits of the Spirit which are now the source of our consolation, even then, "when we were yet without strength," Christ died for us. When every sinew was snapped, every bone broken, every power gone, life itself evaporated, for we were dead in trespasses and sins, even then Christ died for us. Well now, brethren, that is true; do you believe it? I want you to get the argument out of this truth, for it is this. If the Lord Jesus loved us enough to die for us when we had no strength whatever, then he will certainly save us now that he has given us strength.

Just look and see what kind of strength he has given us. According to the context, he has given us peace. What strength is theirs who have peace with God! I can do all things when I know that God is on my side. Well, has he given me the strength that comes out of confidence in him, and perfect reconciliation with him, and will he now let me be destroyed by the enemy? It cannot be.

In addition to peace, he has given us access to himself. What a strength there is in being able to go to God in prayer! By faith, we can go to God whenever we are in need; and am I able to go to my heavenly Father, and tell him all my trouble, and cast my burden upon him, and did his dear Son die for me when I was without strength, and will he leave me now that I can go to him in prayer? O beloved, it is impossible! I cannot imagine his turning against us.

Moreover, according to the third verse, he has now given us patience. We have had a deal of trouble; but it has worked patience. The Lord knows that at one time you had no patience at all; you used, like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, to kick every time he struck you; but now you often hold your tongue, and quietly endure his chastening rod. Patience is a great strength to a man, or a woman, either; if you can be patient, you are strong. Well now, if Christ loved you so as to buy you with his blood when you were impatient, has he given you this strength to be patient under his hand, and do you think that he will destroy you?

And, in addition to patience, he has given you a good deal of experience. I speak to ever so many of God's people here who are experienced Christians; you have gone up hill and down dale, you have tried and proved the faithfulness of God, you have known by experience your own weakness, and your own folly, but you also know God's faithfulness and God's strength. Do you think that the Lord has given you all this experience, and then that he means to play the fool with you? Do you think that he gives and takes away again, like little children in their play? What! has he put you through all these paces, and drilled you in this style, and is he now going to drum you out of the army? No, no; believe nothing of the kind. He that has given you patience and experience will keep you to the end.

And then, in addition to that, he has given you hope, for patience worketh experience: and experience, hope; a hope that maketh not ashamed. Has God really given you a hope? "Oh!" says one, "it is sometimes a very poor hope." Yes; but is it hope in Christ? Do you hope in his mercy? Then remember this text, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy."

The smallest hope, if it comes from God, tremble as it may, is better than the proudest presumption that ever came from self-righteousness. If the Lord Jesus has given thee a hope in his blood, a hope in his intercession, a hope in his eternal faithfulness, ah, believe me, if he loved thee when thou hadst no hope, he will never cast thee away now that thou hast a hope that he has himself given thee!

Only once more upon this point. We read in the fifth verse of "the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Now listen. If, when we were yet without strength, Christ died for us, will he not save us now that he has given us the Holy Ghost? Think of it, Christian. The Holy Ghost has come to live in you; poor and despised, or illiterate and unknown, yet within you dwells the Spirit of God. That body of yours is a temple; that is God's word, not mine: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" Well now, if Christ bought you with his blood when you were no temple, but were a defiled place,—I know not to what vile thing to liken you,—will he let you be broken down now that he has made you a temple, and the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in you? I know that I must be speaking to somebody to-night in great trouble; I am sure that I am, I have it upon my soul that I am addressing some true child of God who is at his wits' end, driven to the utmost extremity of sorrow. Dear friend, believe in thy God; let not a doubt come in about him. The Son of God died for thee upon the cross when thou wast ungodly, and without strength; and he cannot, must not, shall not, be suspected of any wish to cast thee off, or of any possibility of change in his love to thee. My brother, I would say to thee, in thy trouble to-night, what Hopeful said to Christian when he was in the death-river, and cried out, "I sink in deep waters." Hopeful said to him, "Be of good cheer, my brother, I feel the bottom, and it is good." So I feel the bottom to-night, my brother, even if thou dost not; it is a good bottom, and you will never be swept away from it if you are trusting in Jesus. He that brought you into the water, if he makes the tide rise up to your chin, will teach you to swim. When you cannot walk any further, you shall find waters to swim in; and there is no water so deep that the child of God can drown in it. You may go as low as the grave; but you will never go any lower. "Underneath are the everlasting arms." There is always one who is ready to catch you when you are at your very worst as to circumstances and trials. Wherefore, be of good cheer. Magnify God in the fire, and rest assured that he who gave himself up to die for thee, will never lose thee, but will keep thee even to the end.

Now I come to the last point, which is also full of consolation. I think that I heard some one heave a deep sigh, and say, "Ah! it may be as you say, it may be all true, and I trust that it is; but I am in such trouble that, if I do not get help directly, I shall be done for. I have to cry, 'Make haste, O God, make haste for my help!' I want a God who can do what David's God did when 'He rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.'" That is the kind of God that you want; yes, and that is the kind of God that you have. He will come flying to your deliverance, as I will now try to show you.

III. Here is the third well of consolation, CHRIST DIED FOR US IN DUE TIME: "In due time Christ died for the ungodly."

I cannot tell you how much marrow I have found in this bone, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." The teaching of this verse seems to me to be something like this. It means, first, that *Christ died for us when justice required his death.* Suppose that I owe a debt; I am thankful that I do not, but suppose that I did owe a very heavy debt, and that it had to be paid, say, on Tuesday morning, and there is a friend who has undertaken to pay it for me. The bill is due at twelve o'clock, and he says that he will pay it for me. Now suppose that my friend goes in on Wednesday morning, and pays the amount. It is very good of him; but still, you see, I lose my reputation for discharging my liabilities "in due time." I did not meet the bill on Tuesday at twelve. True, there are only four-and-twenty hours lost; but still, I am not the man that I was in the trade I follow, I have been a defaulter. Now, I like to think of this fact, that I, a poor sinner, over head and ears in debt to God's justice, have not only paid him through my great Surety, but I have paid him to the minute. "In due time" my Surety came, and discharged my debt for me. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly."

This verse also means that *Christ died in due time as to every believer.* In God's Book of Remembrance there is no claim for demurrage or delay against any believing sinner. There is no note there saying, "This sinner's Surety died after time." No, but when justice demanded the debt, justice received full payment from that dear hand that was nailed to the cross for me. "In due time Christ died for the ungodly." It was the time appointed in the eternal decree, it was the time arranged in the everlasting counsels of grace; and Christ was there to the tick of the clock. He went up to the tree on the day when it was agreed that he should finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. He made atonement, he died for the ungodly, "in due time."

Well, now, do you see what I am driving at with you? You want help, you say, you want deliverance; very well. The greatest help that you ever did want was for someone to stand and be a Daysman for you, and to pay your debts to infinite justice, and your Lord did it, and did it at the nick of time: "In due time." Will he not, therefore, deliver you in due time?

Besides, he has given you patience: "Tribulation worketh patience." He will help you before you have done with your patience. "I cannot hold out much longer," says one. You shall not have any need to hold out much longer. The Lord is on the way to deliver you; and before your stock of grace-wrought patience shall quite have run out, he will come to you.

Read the next word: "And patience, experience." Your experience, as long as ever it will profit you, will be painful; but when it is no longer an experience that will do you good, it will not be painful. Remember how Paul writes in this same epistle, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose;" and if he has called you, he will let you suffer as long as the experience of the suffering will work

for your good, but no longer; in due time he will bring you out of that trying experience.

And he will bring you out before your hope gets to be ashamed. Read those words again: "And experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed." The Lord will not let your trouble go so far that you will have to say, "I was deceived; I must give up being a Christian." God will not leave you in the hour of need. He will help you in due time, before your expiring hope quite gives up the ghost. Be of good courage about that.

And he will come and help you while yet your love remains. Did I not hear you say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. He may flog me; but I am still his child, and I love him, and I will kiss his hand, and his rod, too"? Well, well, if that is your language, he must come to help you in due time; he must deliver you before that love is driven out of your heart.

Yes, and let me say that, while you are now without strength, he who died for you while you were without strength in the fullest sense, will come and help you. I thank God to-night, as I have done many a time before, for being brought into great straits. Sometimes it has been very plain sailing for years. I remember once saying to myself, "Well, in former days, in the great needs for the College and the Orphanage, I have experienced wonderful miracles of deliverance. Then I seemed to step, like a giant, from the top of one mountain to another, right over the valleys; and now I go along the valleys gently and simply." I have half wished to see another lofty mountain, and another yawning chasm open, that I might see what God would do; *and I have had them!* During the last two years, though I have said little about them, I have had many a crevasse open up before me. The ice has seemed to split asunder, and I have looked down into the blue depths; but I have gone on just as steadily, and God has made the way just as easy as if my path had all been as smooth as a lawn after the garden roller had been over it. It is a glorious thing to have a big trouble, a great Atlantic billow, that takes you off your feet, and sweeps you right out to sea, and lets you sink down into the depths, into old ocean's lowest caverns, till you get to the foundations of the mountains, and there see God, and then come up again to tell what a great God he is, and how graciously he delivers his people. He will deliver you, he must deliver you. The argument of the text is this, "In due time Christ died for the ungodly," therefore, in due time he must help the godly.

Now I finish, with two observations. First, the gospel of sinners is the comfort of saints. If ever you saints want a bit of real comfort, you must just go to God as sinners. I do not think that there is anything better or wiser, whenever you really want to be solidly cheered, than to begin again where you began at first. When the devil says to me, "You are no saint," I say to him, "Nor are you, either." "Ah!" says he, "You are a deceiver," and I reply, "And so are you." "Ah!" says he, "but you are mistaken, your experience has been a delusion, you are no child of God." "What am I, then? Tell me, if you know so much about me." "You are a sinner," says he. "All right, Satan! I thank you for that word, for Jesus Christ came into

the world to save sinners." So I begin again; and if you begin again like that, you will very often find that this is a short cut to comfort. If it comes to a question between the devil and you whether you are a saint or not, you will have a hard battle to fight, let me tell you. One of you may say, "I know that I am a saint." Well, well, well, "let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." "Oh! but I know," says one. Very well, go on knowing it; but if the devil once gets you in the sieve in which he had Peter, I question whether you will know your head from your heels. Under a strong temptation, you will very soon begin almost to doubt your own existence. Instead of arguing the question of your saintship with Satan, who is an old lawyer, and knows many things that you do not know, you had better say, "Whether I am a saint or no, I am not going to dispute; but I am a sinner, and Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Believer, when you were a boy, you used to drink at a certain old well. How cold the water was, how refreshing! When you feel very thirsty, and the pumps are dry, go back to the old well, and get a draught of the living water there. I find that I have to do that every now and then. While I thank God for present enjoyments, and sweet experiences of communion with himself, I like to go back to the old well, and just drink as I drank at the first. I remember how I did drink the first time from that well, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." I think I drank so much that time that I was like behemoth, who trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. There was much in that text; but there was none too much for me, and I seemed to drink it all in. I recommend you to do the same; take a great draught of the grace of God to-night, thirsty child of God! Stoop down, with your mouth right over the well, for the living water comes springing straight up to your lips; and then drink as a cow drinks in the summertime, all that you can take in; and go on your way rejoicing.

The gospel of sinners is the comfort of saints; that is one observation, and the other is this, the comfort of saints is the gospel of sinners; for, if the Lord has done great things for any one of his people, what reason is there, poor sinner, why he should not do the same for you? If the Lord Jesus Christ has loved John Smith, why should he not love Mary Smith; and if the Lord Jesus Christ has saved Tom Jones, why should he not save Harry Jones? I mean that, since he does not love because of any worthiness in us, but simply because he wills to love us, as it is written, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," then you may come, ye guilty ones, to this Sovereign Dispenser of undeserved mercy, and touch the silver sceptre of his grace, and be saved to-night! May his sweet Spirit bring you! Do not let any of us raise a question about whether we are saints or sinners; but let us all come together, let us come *en masse* to the cross, let the whole of us fly to Calvary now, and stand, and look up to him, the eternal Son of God, bleeding and dying on the tree, and let us all believe now that he can, that he will, that he does save, nay, that he has saved our souls. God grant us grace to do it, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

ROMANS V.

Verse 1. *Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God—*

It is a matter of present possession, and present enjoyment. Whatever tribulation there may be in the world, "we have peace with God." Blessed be God for that glorious fact! We may not have peace with all men, though we would seek to have that; but "we have peace with God."

1, 2. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

So we ascend this golden ladder, from faith to peace, from peace to access with God, and from this to joy by the way of hope. Happy people, who know this blessed way of climbing out of the sorrows of the present into the glory that shall be revealed!

3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:*

Present trials even become subjects for thanksgiving. Surely, they have lost their sting when patience accepts them, and faith rejoices in them.

3—5. *Knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

Like a sweet perfume, which enters every room, and fills every nook and cranny in the house, so does the delightful love of God fill the entire man when, by the Holy Ghost, it is shed abroad in the heart. Beloved, may you feel that blessed influence this evening! This next verse may help us to love God, and to feel the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

6. *For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.*

He did not regard us as saints, but as actually ungodly, when he died for our redemption. It was not man's righteousness that brought Christ from heaven; but man's sin, and the infinite pity of God.

7. *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die:*

Though he were as just as Aristides, though he were renowned for justice, nobody would die for him. There is no such attraction in the virtue as would win anyone's love, so as to die for the man who displays it.

7. *Yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.*

For a benevolent, large-hearted, kindly-disposed man some might dare to die. Such a thing is not likely; but it is possible.

8. *But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

We were without any attraction, without any righteousness, without any goodness, yet Christ loved us. Out of the graciousness of his own heart he loved us, according to that text, "I will love them freely."

9. *Much more then,*

See how the apostle, when he has uttered a great truth, proceeds to say something greater still. Just before, he had written, "And not only so," and now he says, "Much more then,"—

9. *Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.*

If Christ died for us when we were sinners, will he not save us now that he has made us saints? If, when we were condemned, he redeemed us, will he not preserve us now that we are justified? This is a strong plea for the final perseverance and ultimate salvation of all believers.

10, 11. *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so,*

The apostle is again up on the wing; he cannot fly high enough to describe all Christ's work. "And not only so,"—

11. *But we also joy in God—*

That is a delightful experience, joying in God himself, in the very character and person of God. So perfectly reconciled are we that, not only do we rejoice in God's gifts, and in his mercy; but we swim in a sea of delight in God himself: "We also joy in God"—

11. *Through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

Now comes an admonition.

12. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Sinned, that is, in the first man.

13, 14. (*For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.*

I suppose that Paul refers even to little children, who "had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," and yet died as the result of Adam's sin.

15—20. *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one: much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.*

Just as, sometimes, a physician may give a medicine which causes the disease to be more fully developed in order to its ultimate cure, so does the law make a discovery of our sin to us, and it also excites us to greater sin, by reason of the enmity of our nature, which is opposed to the law of God, and becomes the more active the more clearly the law is known, even as Paul says, further on in this Epistle, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet."

20, 21. *But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Blessed be his holy name! Amen.

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